The Sunshine Boys

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Neil Simon

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THE GOOD DOCTOR

NEIL SIMON

(All Groups) Comedy

2 Men, 3 Women. Various settings.

With Christopher Plummer in the role of the Writer, we are introduced to a composite of Neil Simon and Anton Chekhov, from whose short stories Simon adapted the capital vignettes of this collection. Frances Sternhagen played, among other parts, that of a harridan who storms a bank and upbraids the manager for his gout and lack of money. A father takes his son to a house where he will be initiated into the mysteries of sex, only to relent at the last moment, and leave the boy more perplexed than ever. In another sketch a crafty seducer goes to work on a wedded woman, only to realize that the woman has been in command from the first overture. Let us not forget the classic tale of a man who offers to drown himself for three rubles. The stories are droll, the portraits affectionate, the humor infectious, and the fun unending.

"As smoothly polished a piece of work as we're likely to see all season."—*N.Y. Daily News.* "A great deal of warmth and humor —vaudevillian humor—in his retelling of these Chekhovian tales."—*Newhouse Newspapers.* "There is much fun here . . . Mr. Simon's comic fancy is admirable."—*N.Y. Times.*

(Music available. Write for particulars.)
ROYALTY, $50-$35

The Prisoner of Second Avenue

NEIL SIMON

(All Groups) Comedy

2 Men, 4 Women, Interior

Mel is a well-paid executive of a fancy New York company which has suddenly hit the skids and started to pare the payroll. Anxiety doesn't help; Mel, too, gets the ax. His wife takes a job to tide them over, then she too is sacked. As if this weren't enough, Mel is fighting a losing battle with the very environs of life. Polluted air is killing everything that grows on his terrace; the walls of the high-rise apartment are paper-thin, so that the private lives of a pair of German stewardesses next door are open books to him; the apartment is burgled; and his psychiatrist dies with $23,000 of his money. Mel does the only thing left for him to do: he has a nervous breakdown. It is on recovery that we come to esteem him all the more. For Mel and his wife and people like them have the resilience, the grit to survive.

"Now all this, mind you, is presented primarily in humorous terms."—*N.Y. Daily News.* "A gift for taking a grave subject and, without losing sight of its basic seriousness, treating it with hearty but sympathetic humor . . . A talent for writing a wonderfully funny line . . . full of humor and intelligence . . . Fine fun."—*N.Y. Post.* "Creates an atmosphere of casual cataclysm, and everyday urban purgatory of copelessness from which laughter seems to be released like vapor from the city's manholes."—*Time.*

ROYALTY, $50-$35

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By Neil Simon

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THE SUNSHINE BOYS was first presented on December 20, 1972, by Emanuel Azenberg and Eugene V. Wolsk at the Broadhurst Theatre, New York City, with the following cast:

(*In Order of Appearance*)

WILLIE CLARK ..... *Jack Albertson*
BEN SILVERMAN ..... *Lewis J. Stadlen*
AL LEWIS ..... *Sam Levene*
PATIENT ..... *Joe Young*
EDDIE ..... *John Batiste*
NURSE ..... *Lee Meredith*
REGISTERED NURSE ..... *Minnie Gentry*

Directed by Alan Arkin
Scenery by Kert Lundell
Costume by Albert Wolsky
Lighting by Tharon Musser

A tape recording of "The Lipton Tea" commercial is available upon receipt of a refundable $10.00 deposit, a $10.00 rental fee, and $2.00 to cover postage and handling.

The Sunshine Boys

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A two-room apartment in an old hotel on upper Broadway in the mid-eighties. It's rather a depressing place. There is a bed, a bureau, a small dining table with two chairs, an old leather chair that faces a TV set on a cheap, metal stand. There is a small kitchen to one side, a small bathroom on the other. A window looks out over Broadway. It is early afternoon, mid-winter.

At rise, the TV is on, the banal dialogue of a soap opera drones on. In the leather chair sits Willie Clark, *in slippers, pajamas and an old bathrobe.* Willie *is in his 70's. He watches the program but is constantly dozing off, then catching himself and watching for a few more minutes at a time. The set drones on and* Willie *dozes off. The tea kettle on the stove in the kitchen comes to a boil and whistles.* Willie's *head perks up at the sound, reaches over and picks up the phone.*

Willie. (*Into phone.*) Hello? . . . Who's this? (*The whistle continues from the kettle and* Willie *looks over in that direction. He hangs up the phone and does not seem embarrassed or even aware of his own absent-mindedness. He simply crosses into kitchen and turns off the flame under the kettle.*)

Voice from TV. . . . We'll be back with "Storm Warning" after this brief message from Lipton Tea.

WILLIE. . . . Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere. (*He puts a tea ball into a mug and pours the boiling water in . . . Then he crosses into living room to the dining table. He takes a spoon and dips into a jar of honey and pours it into his tea . . . he glances over at the TV set which has just played the Lipton Tea commercial.*)

VOICE FROM TV. And now for Part Three of today's "Storm Warning" . . .

WILLIE. What happened to Part Two? I missed Part Two? (*He drinks his tea as Part Three continues and the banal dialogue drones on.* WILLIE *listens as he shuffles towards chair. The TV set, which is away from the wall, has an electric plug running from it, along the ground and into the wall.* WILLIE, *who never seems to look where he's going, comes up against the cord with his foot. Inadvertently he pulls the cord with his foot out of its socket in the wall. The TV set immediately dies.* WILLIE *sits, then looks at the set. Obviously, no picture. He gets up and fiddles with dials. How could his best friend desert him at a time like this? He hits the set on the top with his hand.*) What's the matter with you? (*He hits set again. He twists knobs futilely, never thinking for a moment it might be something as simple as the plug. He slaps the picture tube.*) . . . Come on, for Pete's sakes, what are you doing there? (*He stares at it in disbelief. He kicks the stand on which it rests. Then he crosses to phone, and picks it up.*) . . . Hello? . . . Sandy? . . . Let me have Sandy . . . Sandy? My television's dead . . . My television . . . Is this Sandy? . . . My television died . . . No, not Willie. Mr. Clark to you, please . . . Never mind the jokes, wise guy, it's not funny . . . Send up somebody to fix my dead television . . . I didn't touch nothing . . . Nothing, I'm telling you . . . It's a crappy set . . . You live in a crappy hotel, you get a crappy television . . . The what? . . . The plug? . . . What plug? . . . Wait a minute. (*He lays phone down, crosses to behind set, bends down, picks up plug, looks at*

it. He crosses back to the telephone. Into phone:) . . . Hello? . . . It's not the plug. It's something else. I'll fix it myself. (*He hangs up, crosses to wall plug and plugs it in. The set goes back on.*) He tells me the plug . . . When he calls me Mr. Clark then I'll tell him it was the plug . . . (*He sits and picks up his cup of tea.*) The hell with all of 'em. (*There is a knock on the door . . .* WILLIE *looks at the wall on opposite side.*) Bang all you want, I'm not turning it off. I'm lucky it works. (*Pause . . . Then knock on front door again, this time accompanied by a* MALE VOICE.)

VOICE. Uncle Willie? It's me. Ben. (WILLIE *turns and looks at front door, not acknowlegding that he was mistaken about the knocking on the other wall.*)

WILLIE. Who's that?

BEN'S VOICE. Ben.

WILLIE. Ben? Is that you?

BEN'S VOICE. Yes, Uncle Willie, it's Ben. Open the door.

WILLIE. Wait a minute. (*Rises, crosses to door, tripping over TV cord again, disconnecting set. He starts to unlatch the door, but has difficulty manipulating it. His fingers are not too manipulative.*) Wait a minute . . . (*He is having great difficulty with it.*) . . . Wait a minute.

BEN'S VOICE. Is anything wrong?

WILLIE. (*Still trying.*) Wait a minute. (*He tries forcing it.*)

BEN'S VOICE. What's the matter?

WILLIE. I'm locked in . . . The lock is broken, I'm locked in . . . Go down and tell the boy. Sandy. Tell Sandy that Mr. Clark is locked in.

BEN'S VOICE. What is it, the latch?

WILLIE. It's the latch. It's broken, I'm locked in. Go tell the boy Sandy, they'll get somebody.

BEN'S VOICE. That happened last week. Don't try to force it. Just slide it out. (WILLIE *stares at the latch.*) Uncle Willie, do you hear me? Don't force it. Slide it out.

WILLIE. (*Hands up to the latch.*) Wait a minute. (*Carefully, he slides it out. It comes open.*) It's open. Never mind, I did it myself. (*He opens the door.* BEN SILVERMAN, *a well-dressed man in his early thirties, enters, wearing a topcoat and carrying a shopping bag from Bloomingdale's, filled to the brim with assorted foodstuffs and a copy of the weekly* Variety. BEN *looks at* WILLIE *as he enters.*)

BEN. You probably have to oil it.

WILLIE. I don't have to oil nothing. The hell with 'em. (BEN *hangs up his coat in closet.*)

BEN. (*Crosses to table with shopping bag.*) You feeling alright?

WILLIE. What is this, Wednesday?

BEN. (*Puzzled.*) Certainly. Don't I always come on Wednesdays?

WILLIE. But this is Wednesday today?

BEN. (*Puts bag down.*) Yes, of course. Haven't you been out?

WILLIE. When?

BEN. Today. Yesterday. This week. You haven't been out all week?

WILLIE. (*Crosses to him.*) Sunday. I was out Sunday. I went to the park Sunday. (BEN *hands* WILLIE *the* Variety. WILLIE *tucks it under his arm and starts to look through the shopping bag.*)

BEN. What are you looking for?

WILLIE. (*Going through bag.*) My *Variety.*

BEN. I just gave it to you. It's under your arm.

WILLIE. (*Looks under his arm.*) Why do you put it there? He puts it under my arm.

BEN. (*Starts taking items out of bag.*) Have you been eating properly? No corned beef sandwiches, I hope.

WILLIE. (*Opens to back section.*) Is this today's?

BEN. Certainly it's today's. *Variety* comes out on Wednesday, doesn't it? And today is Wednesday.

WILLIE. I'm just asking, don't get so excited. (BEN

shakes head in consternation.) . . . Because I already read last Wednesdays.

BEN. (*Takes more items out.*) I got you six different kinds of soups. All low-sodium, salt-free. All very good for you . . . Are you listening?

WILLIE. (*Head in paper.*) I'm listening. You got six lousy tasting soups . . . Did you see this?

BEN. What?

WILLIE. What I'm looking at. Did you see this?

BEN. How do I know what you're looking at?

WILLIE. Two new musicals went into rehearsals today and I didn't even get an audition . . . Why didn't I get an audition?

BEN. Because there were no parts for you. One of them is a young Rock musical and the other show is all black.

WILLIE. What's the matter, I can't do black? I did black in 1928. And when I did black, you understood the words, not like today.

BEN. I'm sorry, you're not the kind of black they're looking for. (*He shivers.*) Geez, it's cold in here. You know it's freezing in here? Don't they ever send up any heat?

WILLIE. (*Has turned page.*) How do you like that? Sol Burton died.

BEN. Who?

WILLIE. Sol Burton. The songwriter. 89 years old, went like that, from nothing.

BEN. Why didn't you put on a sweater?

WILLIE. . . . I knew him very well . . . . A terrible person. Mean, mean. He should rest in peace but he was a mean person. His best friends didn't like him.

BEN. (*Goes to bureau for sweater.*) Why is it so cold in here?

WILLIE. You know what kind of songs he wrote? . . . The worst. The worst songs ever written were written by Sol Burton. (*He sings.*) "Lady, Lady, be my baby" . . . Did you ever hear anything so rotten? Baby he rhymes with lady . . . No wonder he's dead. (*He turns page.*)

BEN. This radiator is ice cold. Look, Uncle Willie, I'm not going to let you live here anymore. You've got to let me find you another place . . . I've been asking you for seven years now. You're going to get sick.

WILLIE. (*Still looking at* Variety.) Tom Jones is gonna get a hundred thousand dollars a week in Las Vegas. When Lewis and I were headlining at the Palace, the *Palace* didn't cost a hundred thousand dollars.

BEN. That was forty years ago. And forty years ago this hotel was twenty years old. They should tear it down. They take advantage of all you people in here because they know you don't want to move. (WILLIE *crosses to table and looks in shopping bag.*)

WILLIE. No cigars?

BEN. (*Making notes on his memo pad.*) You're not supposed to have cigars.

WILLIE. Where's the cigars?

BEN. You know the doctor told you you're not supposed to smoke cigars anymore. I didn't bring any.

WILLIE. Gimmie the cigars.

BEN. What cigars? I just said I don't have them. Will you forget the cigars?

WILLIE. Where are they, in the bag?

BEN. On the bottom. I just brought three. It's the last time I'm doing it.

WILLIE. (*Takes out a bag with three cigars.*) How's your family? The children's alright? (*Removes one cigar.*)

BEN. Suddenly you're interested in my family? It's not gonna work, Uncle Willie. I'm not bringing you anymore cigars.

WILLIE. I just want to know how the children are.

BEN. The children are fine. They're wonderful, thank you.

WILLIE. Good. Next time bring the big cigars. (*He puts two cigars in his breast pocket of bathrobe and the other one in his mouth. He crosses into kitchen looking for a light.*)

BEN. You don't even know their names. What are the names of my children?

WILLIE. Millie and Sidney.

BEN. Amanda and Michael.

WILLIE. You didn't like Millie and Sidney?

BEN. I was *never* going to name them Millie and Sidney. You forgot so you made something up. You forget everything. I'll bet you didn't drink the milk from last week. I'll bet it's still in the refrigerator. (*Crosses quickly and looks in.*) There's the milk from last week.

WILLIE. (*Comes out of kitchen, still looking for a light.*) Do they know who I am?

BEN. (*Looking through refrigerator.*) Who?

WILLIE. Amanda and Sidney.

BEN. Amanda and Michael. That you were a big star in vaudeville? They're three years old, Uncle Willie, you think they remember vaudeville? *I* never saw vaudeville . . . This refrigerator won't last another two days.

WILLIE. Did you tell them six times on the Ed Sullivan show? (*He sits, tries cigarette lighter. It's broken.*)

BEN. They never heard of Ed Sullivan. Uncle Willie, they're three years old. They don't follow show business. (*Comes back into living room, sees* WILLIE *with cigar in mouth.*) What are you doing? You're not going to smoke that now. You promised me you'd only smoke one after dinner.

WILLIE. Am I smoking it? Do you see smoke coming from the cigar?

BEN. But you've got it in your mouth.

WILLIE. I'm rehearsing . . . After dinner I'll do the show.

BEN. (*Crossing back into kitchen.*) I'm in the most aggravating business in the whole world and I never get aggravated until I come here. (*He opens cupboards and looks in.*)

WILLIE. (*Looking around.*) . . . So don't come. I got Social Security.

N. You think that's funny? I don't think that's , Uncle Willie.

LLIE. (*Turns pages.*) If you had a sense of humor, you'd think it was funny.

BEN. (*Angrily, through gritted teeth.*) I have a *terrific* sense of humor.

WILLIE. Like your father, he laughed once in 1932.

BEN. I can't talk to you.

WILLIE. Why, they're funny today? Tell me who you think is funny today and I'll show you where he's not funny.

BEN. Let's not get into that, huh? I've got to get back to the office. Just promise me you'll have a decent lunch today.

WILLIE. If I were to tell a joke and got a laugh from you, I'd throw it out.

BEN. How can I laugh when I see you like this, Uncle Willie? You sit in your pajamas all day in a freezing apartment watching soap operas on a 35 dollar television set that doesn't have a horizontal hold. The picture just keeps rolling from top to bottom, pretty soon your eyes are gonna roll around your head . . . You never eat anything, you never go out because you don't know how to work the lock on the door . . . Remember when you locked yourself in the bathroom overnight . . . It's a lucky thing you keep bread in there, you would have starved . . . And you wonder why I worry.

WILLIE. . . . Calvin Coolidge, that's your kind of humor.

BEN. Look, Uncle Willie, promise me you'll eat decently.

WILLIE. I'll eat decently. I'll wear a blue suit, a white shirt and black shoes.

BEN. And if you're waiting for a laugh, you're not going to get one from me.

WILLIE. Who could live that long? Get me a job instead of a laugh.

BEN. (*Sighs, exasperatedly.*) You know I've been try-

ing, Uncle Willie. It's not easy. There's not much in town. Most of the work is commercials . . . and, well, you know, we've had a little trouble in that area.

WILLIE. The potato chips? The potato chips wasn't my fault.

BEN. Forget the potato chips.

WILLIE. What about the Shick Injector? Didn't I audition funny on the Shick Injector?

BEN. You were very funny but your hand was shaking. And you can't show a man shaving with a shaky hand.

WILLIE. Why couldn't you get me on the Alka-Seltzer? That's my kind of comedy. I got a terrific face for an upset stomach.

BEN. I've submitted you twenty times.

WILLIE. What's the matter with twenty one?

BEN. Because the word is out in the business that you can't remember the lines and they're simply not interested.

WILLIE. (*That hurt.*) I couldn't remember the lines? I COULDN'T REMEMBER THE LINES? I don't remember that.

BEN. For the Frito-Lays potato chips. I sent you over to the studio, you couldn't even remember the address.

WILLIE. Don't tell me I didn't remember the lines. The lines I remembered beautifully. The name of the potato chip I couldn't remember . . . What was it?

BEN. Frito-Lays.

WILLIE. Say it again.

BEN. Frito-Lays.

WILLIE. I still can't remember it . . . Because it's not funny. If it's funny, I remember it. Alka-Seltzer is funny. You say 'Alka-Seltzer', you get a laugh . . . The other word is not funny. What is it?

BEN. Frito-Lays.

WILLIE. Maybe in *Mexico* that's funny, not here . . . 57 years I'm in this business, you learn a few things. You know what makes an audience laugh. Do you know which words are funny and which words are *not* funny?

BEN. You told me a hundred times, Uncle Willie. Words with a 'K' in it are funny.

WILLIE. Words with a 'K' in it are funny. You didn't know that, did you? If it doesn't have a 'K' it's not funny . . . I'll tell you which words always get a laugh. (*About to count on fingers.*)

BEN. Chicken.

WILLIE. Chicken is funny.

BEN. Pickle.

WILLIE. Pickle is funny.

BEN. Cup cake.

WILLIE. Cup cake is funny . . . Tomato is *not* funny. Roast beef is *not* funny.

BEN. But cookie is funny.

WILLIE. But cookie is funny.

BEN. Uncle Willie, you've explained that to me ever since I was a little boy.

WILLIE. Cucumber is funny.

BEN. (*Falling in again.*) Car keys.

WILLIE. Car keys is funny.

BEN. Cleveland.

WILLIE. Cleveland is funny . . . Maryland is *not* funny.

BEN. Listen, I have to get back to the office, Uncle Willie, but there's something I'd like to talk to you about first. I got a call yesterday from C.B.S.

WILLIE. Casey Stengel, that's a funny name; Robert Taylor is not funny.

BEN. (*Sighs exasperatedly.*) Why don't you listen to me?

WILLIE. I heard. You got a call from N.B.C.

BEN. C.B.S.

WILLIE. Whatever.

BEN. C.B.S. is doing a big special next month. An hour and a half variety show. They're going to have some of the biggest names in the history of show business. They're trying to get Flip Wilson to host the show.

WILLIE. Him I like. He gives me a laugh. With the

dress and the little giggle and the red wig . . . That's a funny boy . . . What's the boy's name again?

BEN. Flip Wilson. And it doesn't have a K.

WILLIE. But he's *black*, with a K. You see what I mean?

BEN. (*Looks to heaven for help. It doesn't come.*) . . . I do. I do . . . The theme of this Variety show—

WILLIE. What's the theme of the show?

BEN. *The theme of the show* is the history of comedy dating from the early Greek times, through the days of Vaudeville right up to today's stars.

WILLIE. Why couldn't you get me on this show?

BEN. I *got* you on the show.

WILLIE. Alone?

BEN. With Lewis.

WILLIE. (*Turns away.*) You ain't got me on the show.

BEN. Let me finish.

WILLIE. You're finished. It's no.

BEN. Can't you wait until I'm through before you say 'No'? Can't we discuss it for a minute?

WILLIE. I'm busy.

BEN. Doing what?

WILLIE. Saying 'no'.

BEN. You can have the courtesy of hearing me out. They begged me at C.B.S. *Begged* me.

WILLIE. Talk faster because you're coming up to another 'No'.

BEN. They said to me the history of comedy in the United States would not be complete unless they included one of the greatest teams ever to come out of Vaudeville, Lewis and Clark, the Sunshine Boys. The Vice-President of C.B.S. said this to me on the phone.

WILLIE. The Vice-President said this?

BEN. Yes. He is the greatest Lewis and Clark fan in this country. He knows by heart every one of your old routines.

WILLIE. Then let *him* go on with that bastard.

BEN. It's one shot. You would just have to do it one

night, one of the old sketches. They'll pay ten thousand dollars for the team. That's top money for these shows, I promise you. Five thousand apiece. And that's more money than you've earned in two years.

WILLIE. I don't need money. I live alone. I got two nice suits, I don't have a pussycat, I'm very happy.

BEN. You're *not* happy. You're miserable.

WILLIE. *I'm happy!* I just *look* miserable!

BEN. You're dying to go to work again. You call me six times a day in the office. I can't see over my desk for all your messages.

WILLIE. Call me back sometime, you won't get so many messages.

BEN. I call you every day of the week. I'm up here every Wednesday, rain or shine, winter or summer, flu or diphtheria.

WILLIE. What are you, a mailman? You're a nephew. I don't ask you to come. You're my brother's son, you've been very nice to me, I appreciate it but I've never asked you for anything . . . Except for a job. You're a good boy but a stinking agent.

BEN. I'M A GOOD AGENT! . . . Damn it, don't say that to me, Uncle Willie, I'm a *God damn good agent!*

WILLIE. What are you screaming for? What is it, such a wonderful thing to be a good agent?

BEN. (*Holds chest.*) I'm getting chest pains . . . You give me chest pains, Uncle Willie.

WILLIE. It's *my* fault you get excited.

BEN. Yes, it's *your* fault! I only get chest pains on Wednesdays.

WILLIE. So come on Tuesdays.

BEN. (*Starts for door.*) I'm going . . . I don't even want to discuss this with you anymore. You're impossible to talk to. FORGET THE VARIETY SHOW! (*He starts for door.*)

WILLIE. I forgot it.

BEN. (*Stops.*) I'm not coming back anymore . . . I'm not bringing you your *Variety* or your cigars or your low-

sodium soups, do you understand, Uncle Willie? . . . I'm not bringing you anything anymore.

WILLIE. Good. Take care of yourself. Say hello to Millie and Phyllis.

BEN. (*Breathing heavily.*) Why won't you do this for me? I'm not asking you to be partners again. If you two don't get along, alright. But this is just for one night. One last show. Once you get an exposure like that, Alka-Seltzer will come begging to *me* to sign you up . . . Jesus, how is it going to look if I go back to the office and tell them I couldn't make a deal with my own uncle?

WILLIE. My personal opinion? Lousy!

BEN. (*Falls into chair, exhausted.*) . . . Do you really hate Al Lewis that much?

WILLIE. (*Looks away.*) I don't discuss Al Lewis anymore.

BEN. (*Gets up.*) We *have* to discuss him because C.B.S. is waiting for an answer today and if we turn them down, I want to have a pretty good reason why . . . You haven't seen him in, what, ten years now.

WILLIE. (*Takes a long time before answering.*) . . . Eleven years!

BEN. (*Amazed.*) You mean to tell me you haven't spoken to him in eleven years?

WILLIE. I haven't *seen* him in eleven years. I haven't *spoken* to him in twelve years.

BEN. You mean you saw him for a whole year that you didn't speak to him?

WILLIE. It wasn't easy. I had to sneak around backstage a lot.

BEN. But you spoke to him on stage.

WILLIE. Not to *him*. If he played a gypsy, I spoke to the gypsy. If he played a lunatic, I spoke to the lunatic. But that bastard I didn't speak to.

BEN. I can't believe that.

WILLIE. You don't believe it? I can show you witnesses who *saw* me never speaking to him.

BEN. It's been eleven years, Uncle Willie. Hasn't time changed anything for you?

WILLIE. Yes. I hate him eleven years more.

BEN. Why?

WILLIE. Why? . . . You never met him?

BEN. Sure I met him. I was fifteen years old. I met him once at that benefit at Madison Square Garden and once backstage at some television show. He seemed nice enough to me.

WILLIE. That's only twice. You had to meet him three times to hate him.

BEN. Uncle Willie, could I make a suggestion?

WILLIE. He used to give me the finger.

BEN. The what?

WILLIE. The finger! The finger! . . . He would poke me in the chest with the finger. (*He crosses to* BEN *and demonstrates on him by poking a finger in* BEN'S *chest every time he makes a point.*) He would say, "*Listen,* Doctor." (*Pokes finger.*) "I'm *telling* you, Doctor." (*Pokes finger.*) "You know what I *mean,* Doctor." (*Pokes finger.* BEN *rubs his chest painfully.*) Hurts, doesn't it? . . . How'd you like it for 43 years? . . . I got a black and blue hole in my chest . . . My wife to her dying day thought it was a tattoo . . . I haven't worked with him in eleven years, it's just beginning to fade away . . . The man had the sharpest finger in show business.

BEN. If you work with him again, I promise you I'll buy you a thick padded undershirt.

WILLIE. You think I never did that? One night I put a steel plate under my shirt, he gave me the finger, he had it in a splint for a month.

BEN. Something else must have happened you're not telling me about. You don't work with a person for 43 years without some bond of affection remaining.

WILLIE. . . . You wanna hear other things? He used to spit in my face. On stage the-man-would-spit-in my-face!

BEN. Not on purpose.

WILLIE. (*Turns away.*) He tells me 'not on purpose' . . . If there was some way I could have saved the spit, I would show it to you.

BEN. You mean he would just stand there and spit in your face?

WILLIE. What do you think, he's stupid? He worked it into the act. He would stand with his nose on top of my nose and purposely only say words that began with a 'T'. (*As he demonstrates, he spits.*) . . . "*T*ootsie Roll." (*Spit.*) . . . "*T*inker *T*oy." (*Spit.*) . . . "*T*yping on the *t*ypewriter." (*Spits,* BEN *wipes his face.*) . . . Some nights I thought I would drown! . . . I don't know where he got it all from . . . I think he would drink all day and save it up for the night.

BEN. I'll put it in the contract. If he spits at you, he won't get paid.

WILLIE. If he can get another chance to spit at me, he wouldn't *want* to get paid.

BEN. Then will you answer me one question? If it was all that bad, why did you stick together for forty-three years?

WILLIE. (*Turns, looks at him.*) . . . Because he was terrific . . . There'll never be another one like him . . . Nobody could time a joke the way he could time a joke . . . Nobody could say a line the way he said it . . . I knew what he was thinking, he knew what I was thinking . . . One person, that's what we were . . . No, no. Al Lewis was the best. The *best!* . . . You understand?

BEN. I understand.

WILLIE. As an actor, no one could touch him . . . As a human being, no one *wanted* to touch him.

BEN. (*Sighs.*) . . . So what do I tell C.B.S.? No deal because Al Lewis spits?

WILLIE. You know when the last time was we worked together?

BEN. Eleven years ago on the Ed Sullivan Show.

WILLIE. Eleven years ago on the Ed Sullivan Show . . . July 27th . . . He wouldn't put us on in the winter

when people were watching, but never mind . . . We did the Doctor and the Tax Examination . . . You never saw that, did you?

BEN. No, but I heard it's wonderful.

WILLIE. What about a 'classic'? A *classic!* . . . A *dead* person watching that sketch would laugh . . . We did it maybe eight thousand times, it never missed . . . *That* night is missed . . . Something was wrong with him, he was rushing, his timing was off, his mind was someplace else . . . I thought he was sick . . . Still we got terrific applause . . . Five times Ed Sullivan said, 'How about that'? . . . We got back into the dressing room, he took off his make-up, put on his clothes and said to me, "Willie, if it's all the same to you, I'm retiring" . . . I said, "What do you mean, retiring? It's not even nine o'clock. Let's have something to eat" . . . He said, "I'm not retiring for the night. I'm retiring for what's left of my life" . . . And he puts on his hat, walks out of the theater, becomes a stockbroker and I'm left with an act where I ask questions and there's no one there to answer . . . Never saw the man again to this day . . . Oh, he called me, I wouldn't answer . . . He wrote me, I tore it up . . . He sent me telegrams, they're probably still under the door.

BEN. Well, Uncle Willie, with all due respect, you really weren't getting that much work anymore. Maybe he was getting tired of doing the same thing for 43 years . . . I mean a man has a right to retire when he wants, doesn't he?

WILLIE. Not him. Don't forget, when he retired himself, he retired me too . . . And God damn it, I wasn't ready yet . . . Now suddenly maybe he needs five thousand dollars and he wants to come crawling back, the hell with him. I'm a single now . . .

BEN. I spoke to Al Lewis on the phone last night. He doesn't even care about the money. He just wants to do the show for old times' sake. For his grandchildren who never saw him.

WILLIE. Sure. He probably retired broke from the stock market. I guarantee you *those* high class people never got a spit in the face once.

BEN. Did you know his wife died two years ago? He's living with his daughter now, somewhere in New Jersey . . . He doesn't do anything anymore. He's got very bad arthritis, he's got asthma, he's got poor blood circulation—

WILLIE. I'll send him a pump . . . He'll outlive *you,* believe me.

BEN. He wants very much to do this show, Willie.

WILLIE. With arthritis? Forget it. Instead of a finger, he'll poke me with a cane.

BEN. C.B.S. wants you to do the Doctor sketch. Lewis told me he could get on a stage tonight and do that sketch letter perfect. He doesn't even have to rehearse it.

WILLIE. I don't even want to discuss it . . . And in the second place, I would definitely not do it without a rehearsal.

BEN. Alright, then will you agree to this? Just rehearse with him one day. If it doesn't work out, we'll call it off.

WILLIE. I don't trust him. I think he's been planning this for eleven years. We rehearse all week and then he walks out on me just before the show.

BEN. Let me call him on the phone. (*Crossing to phone.*) Let me set up a rehearsal time for Monday.

WILLIE. WAIT A MINUTE! I got to think about this.

BEN. We don't have that much time. C.B.S is waiting to hear.

WILLIE. What's their rush? What are they, going out of business?

BEN. (*Picks up phone.*) I'm dialing. I'm dialing him, Uncle Willie, okay?

WILLIE. 60-40 . . . I get six thousand, he gets four thousand . . . What the hell can he buy in New Jersey anyway?

BEN. (*Holding phone.*) I can't do that, Uncle Willie . . . God, I hope this works out.

WILLIE. Tell him I'm against it. I want him to know. I'll do it with an 'against it'.

BEN. It's ringing.

WILLIE. And he's got to come here. I'm not going there, you understand?

BEN. He's got to be home. I told him I would call about one.

WILLIE. Sure. You know what he's doing? He's practising spitting.

BEN. (*Into phone.*) Hello? . . . Mr. Lewis? . . . Ben Silverman . . . Yes, fine, thanks . . . I'm here with him now.

WILLIE. Willie Clark. The one he left on the Ed Sullivan Show. Ask him if he remembers.

BEN. It's okay, Mr. Lewis . . . Uncle Willie said yes.

WILLIE. With an 'against it'. Don't forget the 'against it'.

BEN. No, he's very anxious to do it.

WILLIE. (*Jumping up in anger.*) WHO'S ANXIOUS?? . . . I'M AGAINST IT! . . . TELL HIM, you lousy nephew.

BEN. Can you come here for rehearsal on Monday? . . . Oh, that'll be swell . . . In the morning. (*To* WILLIE.) About eleven o'clock? How long is the drive. About two hours?

WILLIE. Make it nine o'clock.

BEN. Be reasonable, Willie. (*Into phone.*) Eleven o'clock is fine, Mr. Lewis . . . Can you give me your address, please, so I can send you the contracts. (*He takes pen out of pocket and writes on his notebook.*) One one nine, South Pleasant Drive . . .

WILLIE. Tell him if he starts with the spitting or poking, I'm taking him to court. I'll have a man on the show watching. Tell him.

BEN. West Davenport, New Jersey . . . Oh nine seven oh four . . .

WILLIE. I don't want any— (*Spitting.*) —"Toy tele-

phones *t*apping on *t*in *t*urtles" . . . tell him . . . Tell him.

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

The following Monday. A few minutes before eleven.

The stage is empty. Suddenly the bathroom door opens and WILLIE *emerges. He is still wearing his slippers and the same pajamas, but instead of his bathrobe, he has made a concession to the occasion. He is wearing a double-breasted blue suit jacket, buttoned, and he is putting a handkerchief in his pocket. He looks in the mirror, brushes back his hair. He shuffles over to the window and looks out. There is a knock on the door.* WILLIE *turns and stares at it. He doesn't move. There is another knock and then we hear* BEN'S *voice.*

BEN'S VOICE. Uncle Willie. It's Ben.

WILLIE. Ben? Is that you?

BEN'S VOICE. Yes. Open up. (WILLIE *starts to door, then stops.*)

WILLIE. . . . You're alone or he's with you?

BEN. I'm alone.

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) Wait a minute. (*The latch is locked again and again he has trouble getting it open.*) Wait a minute.

BEN. Slide it, don't push it.

WILLIE. Wait a minute. I'll push it.

BEN. *DON'T* PUSH IT! SLIDE IT!

WILLIE. Wait a minute. (*He gets it open and opens door.* BEN *walks in.*) You're supposed to slide it.

BEN. I rushed like crazy. I didn't want him getting here before me. Did he call or anything?

WILLIE. Where's the *Variety?*

BEN. (*Taking off his coat.*) It's Monday, not Wednesday . . . Didn't you know it was Monday?

WILLIE. I remembered but I forgot.

BEN. What are you wearing? What is that? You look half-dressed.

WILLIE. Why, for him I should get *all* dressed?

BEN. Are you alright? Are you nervous or anything?

WILLIE. Why should *I* be nervous? *He* should be nervous. I don't get nervous.

BEN. Good.

WILLIE. Listen, I changed my mind. I'm not doing it.

BEN. *What?*

WILLIE. Don't get so upset. Everything is the same as before except I'm not doing it.

BEN. When did you decide this?

WILLIE. I decided it when you asked me.

BEN. No, you didn't. You told me you *would* do it.

WILLIE. Well, it was a bad decision. This time I made a good one.

BEN. Well, I'm sorry, you have to do it. I've already told C.B.S. that you would be rehearsing this week and more important, that man is on his way over here now and I'm not going to tell him that you called it off.

WILLIE. We'll leave him a note outside the door.

BEN. We're not leaving any notes . . . That's why I came here this morning, I was afraid you would try something like this . . . I'm going to stay until I think you're both acting like civilized human beings . . . and then when you're ready to rehearse, I'm going to leave you alone. Is that understood?

WILLIE. I'm sick. I woke up sick today.

BEN. No, you're not.

WILLIE. What are you, a doctor? You're an agent. I'm telling you I'm sick.

BEN. What's wrong?

WILLIE. I think I got hepatitis.

BEN. You don't even know what hepatitis is.

WILLIE. If you got it, what's the difference?

BEN. There's nothing wrong with you except a good case of the nerves. You're not backing out, Willie. I don't care what kind of excuse you make, you're going to go through with this. You promised me you would give it at least one day.

WILLIE. I'll pick another day.

BEN. TODAY! You're going to meet with him and rehearse with him TODAY. Now *stop* and just behave yourself.

WILLIE. What do you mean, behave yourself? Who do you think you're talking to, Susan and Jackie?

BEN. *Amanda* and Jackie! . . . Michael! I wish I were. I can reason with them . . . And now I'm getting chest pains on Monday.

WILLIE. Anyway, he's late. He's purposely coming late to aggravate me.

BEN. (*Looking out window.*) He's not late. It's two minutes after eleven.

WILLIE. So what is he, early? He's *late!*

BEN. You're *looking* to start trouble, I can tell.

WILLIE. I was up and dressed at eight o'clock, don't tell me.

BEN. Why didn't you shave?

WILLIE. Get me the Shick commercial, I'll shave. (*He looks in mirror.*) I really think I got hepatitus. Look how green I look.

BEN. You don't get green from hepatitus. You get yellow.

WILLIE. Maybe I got a very bad case.

BEN. (*Looks at his watch.*) Now you got me nervous. I wonder if I should call him? Maybe he's sick.

WILLIE. (*Glares at him.*) You believe *he's* sick, but me you won't believe . . . why don't you become *his* nephew? (*Suddenly there is a knock on the door.* WILLIE *freezes and stares at it.*)

BEN. That's him. You want me to get it?

WILLIE. Get what? I didn't hear anything.

BEN. (*Starts towards door.*) Alright, now take it easy . . . Please just behave yourself and give this a chance. Promise me you'll give it a chance.

WILLIE. (*Starts for kitchen.*) I'll give it every possible chance in the world . . . But it's not gonna work.

BEN. Where are you going?

WILLIE. To make tea. I feel like some hot tea. (*He crosses into kitchen and closes curtain. He starts to fill up kettle with water.*)

BEN. (*Panicky.*) *Now?? Now??* (BEN *looks at him exasperated, a knock on the door again and* BEN *crosses to it and opens it.* AL LEWIS *stands there. He is also about 70 years old and is dressed in his best blue suit, hat, scarf and carries a walking stick. He was probably quite a gay blade in his day but time has slowed him down somewhat . . . Our first impression is that he is soft-spoken and pleasant . . . and a little nervous.*) Mr. Lewis, how do you do, I'm Ben Silverman. (BEN, *nervous, extends hand.*)

AL. How are you. Hello. It's nice to see you. (*His eyes dart around looking for* WILLIE. *He doesn't see him yet.*) How do you do? . . . Hello . . . Hello . . . How are you?

BEN. We met before, a long time ago. My father took me backstage, I forget the theater . . . It must have been fifteen, twenty years ago.

AL. I remember . . . Certainly . . . It was backstage . . . Maybe fifteen, twenty years ago . . . I forget the theater.

BEN. That's right.

AL. Sure, I remember. (*He has walked into the room and shoots a glance towards the kitchen.* WILLIE *doesn't look up from his tea-making.*)

BEN. Please sit down. Uncle Willie's making some tea.

AL. Thank you very much. (*He sits on the edge of the table.*)

BEN. (*Trying hard to make conversation.*) Er . . . did you have any trouble getting in from Jersey?

AL. My daughter drove me in. She has a car.

BEN. Oh. That's nice.

AL. A 1972 Chrysler . . . Black . . .

BEN. Yes, the Chrysler's a wonderful car.

AL. The big one . . . The Imperial.

BEN. I know. I drove it.

AL. My daughter's car?

BEN. No. The big Chrysler Imperial . . . I rented one in California.

AL. (*Nods.*) No, she owns.

BEN. I understand . . . Do you come into New York often?

AL. Today's the first time in two years.

BEN. Really? Well, how did you find it?

AL. My daughter drove.

BEN. No, I mean, do you find the city different in the two years since you've been here?

AL. It's not my New York.

BEN. No, I suppose it's not. (*He shoots a glance towards the kitchen . . .* WILLIE *still hasn't looked in.*) Hey, listen, I'm really very excited about all this . . . Well, for that matter, everyone in the industry is.

AL. (*Nods, noncommittally.*) Well, we'll see. (*He looks around the room, scrutinizing it.*)

BEN. (*He calls out towards kitchen.*) Uncle Willie, how we doing? (*No answer . . . Embarrassed, to* AL.) I guess it's not boiling yet . . . Oh, listen, I'd like to arrange to have a car pick you up and take you home after you're through rehearsing.

AL. My daughter's going to pick me up.

BEN. Oh, I see . . . What time did you say? Four? Five?

AL. She's going to call me every hour.

BEN. Right . . . (*Suddenly* WILLIE *sticks his head out of kitchen, but looks at* BEN *and not at* AL.)

WILLIE. One tea or two teas.

BEN. Oh, here he is. Well, Uncle Willie, I guess it's been a long time since you two—

WILLIE. One tea or two teas?

BEN. Oh. Er, nothing for me, thanks. I'm just about leaving . . . Mr. Lewis? Some tea?

AL. (*Doesn't look towards* WILLIE.) Tea would be nice, thank you.

BEN. (*To* WILLIE.) Just the one, Uncle Willie.

WILLIE. You're sure? I got two tea balls. I could dunk again.

BEN. (*Looks at watch.*) No, I've got to get back to the office. Honestly.

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) Mm hmm. One tea. (*On his way back in, he darts a look at* LEWIS, *then goes back into kitchen. He pulls curtain shut.*)

BEN. (*To* LEWIS.) Well, er . . . do you have any questions you want to ask about the show? About the studio or rehearsals or the air date? Is there anything on your mind that I could help you with?

AL. Like what?

BEN. Like er, the studio? Or rehearsals? Or air date? Things like that?

AL. . . . You got the props?

BEN. Which props are those?

AL. The props. For the doctor sketch. You gotta have props.

BEN. Oh, props. Certainly. What do you need? I'll tell them. (*Takes out pad, writes.*)

AL. You need a desk. A telephone. A pointer. A blackboard. A piece of white chalk, a piece of red chalk . . . A skeleton, not too tall, a stethoscope, a thermometer, an 'ahh' stick . . .

BEN. What's an ah stick?

AL. To put in your mouth to say 'ahh.'

BEN. Oh. Right, an 'ahh' stick.

AL. A look stick, a bottle of pills—

BEN. A look stick? What's a look stick?

AL. A stick to look in the ears. With cotton on the end . . .

BEN. Right. A look stick.

AL. A bottle of pills. Big ones, like for a horse.

BEN. (*Makes circle with his two fingers.*) About this big?

AL. That's for a pony. (*Makes circle using fingers on both hands.*) For a horse is like this . . . Some bandages, cotton, an eye chart—

BEN. Wait a minute, you're going too fast.

AL. (*Slowly.*) *A*-desk . . . *a*-telephone . . . *a*-pointer . . .

BEN. No, I got all that . . . after the cotton and eye chart.

AL. A man's suit. Size 40. Like the one I'm wearing.

BEN. Also in blue?

AL. What do I need two blue suits? Get me a brown.

BEN. A brown suit . . . Is that all?

AL. That's all.

WILLIE. (*In kitchen, without looking in.*) A piece of liver.

AL. That's all plus a piece of liver.

BEN. What kind of liver?

AL. Regular calves liver. From the butcher . . .

BEN. Like how much? A pound?

AL. A little laugh is a pound. A big laugh is two pounds . . . Three pounds with a lot of blood'll bring the house down.

BEN. Is that it?

AL. That's it. And a blonde.

BEN. You mean a woman?

AL. You know a blonde nurse that's a man? . . . Big! As big as you can find. With a big chest, a forty, a forty-five . . . and a nice bottom . . .

BEN. You mean a sexy girl with a full, round, rear end?

AL. (*Spreads hand apart.*) About like this . . . (*Makes smaller behind with hands.*) This is too small . . .

(*Makes bigger one.*) And this is too big. (*Goes back to original one.*) Like this is perfect . . .

BEN. I know what you mean.

AL. If you can bring me pictures, I'll pick out one.

BEN. There's a million girls like that around.

AL. The one we had was the best . . . I would call her but she's maybe 55, 60.

BEN. No, no. I'll get a girl . . . Anything else?

AL. Not for me.

BEN. Uncle Willie?

WILLIE. (*From kitchen.*) I wasn't listening.

BEN. Well, if either of you think of anything, just call me. (*Looks at watch again.*) Eleven fifteen, I've got to go. (*He gets up.*) Uncle Willie, I'm going. (*He crosses to* LEWIS *and extends hand.*) Mr. Lewis, I can't express to you enough how happy I am and speaking for the millions of young people in this country who never had the opportunity of seeing Lewis and Clark work, I just want to say 'thank you'. To both of you. (*Calls out.*) To *both of you,* Uncle Willie.

AL. (*Nods in his seat.*) I hope they won't be disappointed.

BEN. Oh, they won't.

AL. I know they won't. I'm just saying it.

BEN. (*Crosses to kitchen.*) *Goodbye,* Uncle Willie. I'm going.

WILLIE. I'll show you the elevator.

BEN. I *know* where it is . . . I'll call you tonight . . . I just want to say that this is a very happy moment for me. To see you both together again, reunited . . . The two kings of comedy . . . (*Big smile.*) I'm sure it must be *very exciting* for the both of you, isn't it? (*No answer. They both just stare at him.*) Well, it looks like we're off to a great start. I'll call you later. . . . Goodbye. (*He leaves and closes door. They are alone.* WILLIE *carries two teas to dining table, where the sugar jar is. He pours himself a teaspoonful of sugar . . . Without looking in* AL'S *direction, he asks him:*)

WILLIE. Sugar?

AL. (*Doesn't turn.*) If you got.

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) I got sugar. (*He bangs sugar down in front of* AL, *crosses with tea to his leather chair and sits . . . and then the two drink tea . . . silently and interminably. They blow, they sip, they blow, they sip and they sit. Finally:*) . . . You like a cracker?

AL. (*Sips.*) What kind of cracker?

WILLIE. Graham, chocolate, cocoanut, whatever you want.

AL. Maybe just a plain cracker.

WILLIE. I don't have plain crackers. I got graham, chocolate and cocoanut.

AL. Alright, a graham cracker.

WILLIE. (*Without turning, points into kitchen.*) They're in the kitchen, in the closet. (AL *looks over at him, a little surprised at his uncordiality. He nods in acknowledgement.*)

AL. Maybe later. (*They both sip their tea.*)

WILLIE. (*Long pause.*) I was sorry to hear about Lillian.

AL. Thank you.

WILLIE. She was a nice woman. I always liked Lillian.

AL. Thank you.

WILLIE. . . . And how about you?

AL. Thank God, knock wood— (*Raps knuckles on his cane.*) —perfect.

WILLIE. I heard different. I heard your blood didn't circulate.

AL. Not true. My blood circulates . . . I'm not saying *everywhere,* but it circulates.

WILLIE. Is that why you use the cane?

AL. It's not a cane. It's a walking stick . . . Maybe once in a great while it's a cane . . .

WILLIE. I've been lucky, thank God . . . I'm in the pink.

AL. I was looking. For a minute I thought you were having a flush.

WILLIE. (*Sips his tea.*) You know Sol Burton died?

AL. Go on . . . Who's Sol Burton?

WILLIE. You don't remember Sol Burton?

AL. (*Thinks.*) . . . Oh, yes. The manager from the Belasco.

WILLIE. That was Sol Bernstein.

AL. Not Sol Bernstein. Sol *Burton* was the manager from the Belasco.

WILLIE. Sol *Bernstein* was the manager from the Belasco and it wasn't the Belasco, it was the Morosco.

AL. Sid *Weinstein* was the manager from the Morosco. Sol *Burton* was the manager from the Belasco. Sol *Bernstein* I don't know *who* the hell was.

WILLIE. How can you remember anything if your blood doesn't circulate?

AL. It circulates in my *head*. It doesn't circulate in my *feet*. (*He stomps his foot on the floor a few times.*)

WILLIE. Is anything coming down?

AL. Wait a minute. Wasn't Sid Weinstein the songwriter?

WILLIE. NO, for crise sakes! That's SOL BURTON!

AL. Who wrote 'Lady, lady, be my baby'?

WILLIE. That's what I'm telling you! Sol Burton, the lousy songwriter.

AL. Oh, *that* Sol Burton . . . He died?

WILLIE. Last week.

AL. Where?

WILLIE. (*Points.*) In *Variety*.

AL. Sure, now I remember . . . And how is Sol Bernstein?

WILLIE. I didn't read anything.

AL. Good. I always liked Sol Bernstein. (*They quietly sip their tea.* AL *looks around the room.*) Sooo . . . this is where you live now?

WILLIE. Didn't I always live here?

AL. (*Looks again.*) Not in here. You lived in the big suite.

WILLIE. This *is* the big suite . . . Now it's five small suites . . . (AL *nods, understanding.*)

AL. (*Looks around.*) That's what they do today . . . Anything to squeeze a dollar . . . What do they charge now for a small suite?

WILLIE. The same as they used to charge for the big suite. (AL *nods, understanding.*)

AL. I have a very nice room with my daughter in New Jersey . . . I have my own bathroom, they don't bother me, I don't bother them.

WILLIE. What is it, in the country?

AL. Certainly it's in the country. Where do you think New Jersey is, in the city?

WILLIE. (*Shrugs.*) New Jersey is what I see from the bench on Riverside Drive . . . What have they got, a private house?

AL. Certainly it's a private house. It's some big place. Three quarters of an acre . . . They got their own trees, their own bushes, a nice little swimming pool for the kids they blow up in the summertime . . . A big swing in the back, a little dog house, a rock garden—

WILLIE. A what?

AL. A rock garden.

WILLIE. What do you mean, a rock garden? You mean for rocks?

AL. You never saw a rock garden?

WILLIE. And I'm not that anxious.

AL. It's beautiful. A Chinaman made it . . . Someday you'll take a bus and you'll come out and I'll show you.

WILLIE. I should drive all the way out to New Jersey on a bus to see a rock garden?

AL. You don't even know what I'm talking about. You have to live in the country to appreciate it. I never thought it was possible I could be so happy in the country.

WILLIE. You don't mind it's so quiet?

AL. (*Looks at him.*) They got noise in New Jersey . . . But it's a quiet noise . . . Birds . . . drizzling . . .

Not like here with the buses and trucks and screaming and yelling . . .

WILLIE. Well, it's different for you. You like the country better because you're retired. You can sit on a porch, look at a tree, watch a bush growing . . . you're still not active like me. You got a different temperament, you're a slow person.

AL. I'm a slow person?

WILLIE. You're here fifteen minutes, you still got a whole cup of tea. I'm finished already.

AL. That's right. You're finished and I'm still enjoying it. That was always the difference with us.

WILLIE. You're wrong. I can get up and make a *second* cup of tea and enjoy it twice as much as you . . . I like a busy life. That's why I love the city. I gotta be near a phone. I never know when a picture's gonna come up, a musical, a commercial . . .

AL. When did you do a picture?

WILLIE. They're negotiating.

AL. When did you do a musical?

WILLIE. They're talking.

AL. When did you do a commercial?

WILLIE. All the time. I did one last week.

AL. For what?

WILLIE. For er . . . for the . . . what's it, the potato chips.

AL. What potato chips?

WILLIE. The big one. The crispy potato chips . . . Er . . . you know.

AL. What do I know? I don't eat potato chips.

WILLIE. Well, what's the difference what the name is.

AL. They hire you to sell potato chips and you can't remember the name?

WILLIE. Did you remember Sol Burton?

AL. (*Shrugs.*) I'm not selling Sol Burton.

WILLIE. Listen, I don't want to argue with you.

AL. I didn't come from New Jersey to argue. (*They sit*

quietly for a few seconds, AL *sips his tea,* WILLIE *looks at his empty cup.*)

WILLIE. (*Finally.*) Sooo . . . what do you think? . . . You want to do the doctor sketch?

AL. (*Thinks.*) Well, listen, it's very good money . . . It's only a few days' work, I can be back in New Jersey. If you feel you'd like to do it, then my feeling is I'm agreeable.

WILLIE. And my feeling they told you.

AL. What?

WILLIE. They didn't tell you? My feeling is I'm against it.

AL. You're against it?

WILLIE. Right. But I'll do it if you want to.

AL. I don't want to do it if you're against it. If you're against it, don't do it.

WILLIE. What do you care if I'm against it as long as we're doing it? I just want you to know *why* I'm doing it.

AL. Don't do me any favors.

WILLIE. Who's doing you a favor? I'm doing my nephew a favor. It's be good for him in the business if we do it.

AL. You're sure?

WILLIE. Certainly I'm sure. It's a big break for a kid like that to get big stars like us.

AL. That's different. In that case, I'm against it too but I'll do it.

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) As long as we understand each other.

AL. And I want to be sure you know I'm not doing it for the money. The money goes to my grandchildren.

WILLIE. The whole thing?

AL. The whole thing. But not now. Only if I die. If I don't die, it'll be for my old age.

WILLIE. The same with me.

AL. You don't have grandchildren.

WILLIE. My *nephew's* children. Sidney and Marvin.

AL. (*Nods.*) Very good.

WILLIE. Okay . . . So, you wanna rehearse?

AL. You're not against rehearsing?

WILLIE. Why should I be against rehearsing? I'm only against doing the show. Rehearsing is important.

AL. Alright, let's rehearse. Why don't we move the furniture and we'll make the set. (*They both get up and start to move the furniture around. First each one takes a single chair and moves it in a certain position. Then they both take a table and jointly move it away. Then they each take the chairs the other one moved before, and move it into a different place. Every time one moves something somewhere, the other moves it in a different spot . . . Finally* WILLIE *becomes aware that they are getting nowhere.*)

WILLIE. Wait a minute, wait a minute. What the hell are we doing here?

AL. I'm fixing up the set, I don't know what you're doing.

WILLIE. You're fixing up the set?

AL. That's right.

WILLIE. You're fixing up the set for the doctor sketch? (AL *looks at him for a long time without saying a word. It suddenly becomes clear to him.*)

AL. Ohh, the *doctor* sketch? (*He then starts to pick up a chair and move it into another position.* WILLIE *does the same with another chair. They both move table . . . and then they repeat what they did before. Every time one moves a chair, the other one moves the same chair to a different position.* WILLIE *stops and looks again.*)

WILLIE. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! We're doing the same God damn thing. Are you fixing up for the doctor sketch or are you redecorating my apartment?

AL. I'm fixing up for the doctor sketch. If you'd leave what I'm doing alone, we'd be finished.

WILLIE. We'd be finished but we'd be wrong.

AL. Not for the doctor sketch. I know what I'm doing. I did this sketch for 43 years.

WILLIE. And where was I all that time, taking a

smoke? Who did you think did it with you for 43 years? That was *me,* Mister.

AL. Don't call me Mister, you know my name. I never liked it when you called me Mister.

WILLIE. It's not a dirty word.

AL. It is when you say it.

WILLIE. Forgive me, *sir.*

AL. Let's please, for Pete's sakes, fix up for the doctor sketch.

WILLIE. You think *you* know how to do it? You fix it up.

AL. It'll be my pleasure. (WILLIE *stands aside and watches with arms folded as* AL *proceeds to move table and chairs and stools until he arranges it exactly the way he wants it. Then he stands back and folds his arms the same way.*) There! *That's* the doctor sketch!

WILLIE. (*Smiles arrogantly.*) . . . For how much money?

AL. I don't want to bet you.

WILLIE. You're afraid to lose?

AL. I'm afraid to *win.* You don't even have enough to buy a box of plain crackers.

WILLIE. Don't be so afraid you're gonna win because you're gonna lose! That's not the doctor sketch. That's the gypsy chiropractor sketch.

AL. You're positive?

WILLIE. I'm *more* than positive. I'm *sure.*

AL. Alright . . . show me the doctor sketch.

WILLIE. (*Looks at him confidently, then crosses to a chair, picks it up and moves it to the left about four inches, if that much. Then he folds his arms over his chest.*) There, *that's* the doctor sketch!

AL. (*Looks at him.*) You know what you are, Willie? You're a lapalooza.

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) If I'm a lapalooza, you're a mister.

AL. . . . Let's please rehearse the sketch.

WILLIE. Alright, go outside, I'm in the office.

AL. You gonna do the part with the nurse first?

WILLIE. You see a nurse here? How can I rehearse with a nurse that's not here?

AL. I'm just asking a question. I'm not allowed to ask questions?

WILLIE. Ask whatever you want. But try to make them intelligent questions.

AL. I beg your pardon. I usually ask the kind of question to the kind of person I'm talking to . . . You get my drift?

WILLIE. I get it, mister.

AL. Alright. Let's skip over the nurse. We'll start from where I come in.

WILLIE. Alright, from where you come in. First go out.

AL. (*Takes a few steps towards the door, stops and turns.*) Alright, I'm outside. (*Pantomimes with fist, knocking on door.*) Knock knock knock! I was looking for the doctor.

WILLIE. Wait a minute. You're not outside.

AL. Certainly I'm outside.

WILLIE. If you were outside, you couldn't see me, could you?

AL. No.

WILLIE. Can you see me?

AL. Yes.

WILLIE. So you're not outside. Go *all* the way outside. What the hell kind of a rehearsal is this?

AL. It's a rehearsing rehearsal. Can't you make believe I'm all the way out in the hall?

WILLIE. I could also make believe you were still in New Jersey, but you're not. You're here. Let's have a professional rehearsal, for crise sakes. We ain't got a nurse but we got a door. Let's use what we got.

AL. (*Sighs deeply.*) Listen, we're not gonna stop for every little thing, are we? I don't know how many years I got left, I don't wanna spend it rehearsing.

WILLIE. We're not gonna stop for the little things. We're gonna stop for the big things . . . The door is a big thing.

AL. Alright, I'll go through the door, I'll come in and then we'll run through the sketch once or twice and that'll be it for today. Alright?

WILLIE. Right . . . Unless another big thing comes up.

AL. (*Glares at him.*) Alright, I'm going out. I'll be right back in. (*He crosses to door, opens it, stops and turns.*) If I'm outside and my daughter calls, tell her to pick me up in an hour. (*He goes out and closes the door behind him.*)

WILLIE. (*Mumbles half to himself.*) She can pick you up *now* for all I care. (*He puts his hands behind his back, clasps them and paces back and forth. He calls out:*) Alright! Knock knock knock!

AL. (*From outside.*) Knock knock knock!

WILLIE. (*Screams.*) *Don't say it,* for God's sakes, *do it!* (*To himself.*) . . . He probably went *crazy* in the country.

AL. (*From outside.*) You ready?

WILLIE. (*Yells.*) I'm ready. Knock, knock, knock. (AL *knocks three times on the door.*) . . . Come in. (*We see and hear the doorknob jiggle but it doesn't open . . . This is repeated.*) Alright, come in alright.

AL. (*From outside.*) It doesn't open . . . it's stuck.

WILLIE. (*Wearily.*) Alright, wait a minute. (*He shuffles over to the door and puts hand on knob and pulls. It doesn't open.*) . . . Wait a minute. (*He tries again, to no avail.*)

AL. (*From outside.*) What's the matter?

WILLIE. Wait a minute. (*He pulls harder, to no avail.*)

AL. Is it locked?

WILLIE. It's not locked. Wait a minute. (*He tries again, it doesn't open.*) It's locked. You better get somebody. Call the boy downstairs. Sandy. Tell him it's locked.

AL. (*From outside.*) Let me try it again.

WILLIE. What are you wasting time? Call the boy. Tell him it's locked. (AL *tries it again turning it in the other*

direction and the door opens. They stand there face to face.)

AL. I fixed it.

WILLIE. (*Glares at him.*) You didn't fix it. You just don't know how to open a door.

AL. . . . Did my daughter call?

WILLIE. You know I think you went crazy in the country.

AL. You want to stand here and insult me or do you wanna rehearse the sketch?

WILLIE. I would like to do *both* but we ain't got the time . . . Let's forget the door. Stand in here and say 'knock knock knock.'

AL. (*Comes in and closes the door. Sarcastically.*) I hope I can get *out* again.

WILLIE. I hope so too . . . (*He places hands behind back and paces.*) Alright, 'Knock knock knock.'

AL. (*Pantomimes with fist.*) Knock knock knock.

WILLIE. (*Sing-song.*) Enter!

AL. (*Stops, looks at him.*) What do you mean 'Enter'? (*He does it in same sing-song way.*) What happened to 'come-in'?

WILLIE. It's the same thing, isn't it? Enter or come-in. What's the difference, as long as you're in.

AL. The difference is we've done this sketch 12,000 times and you've always said 'Come-in' and suddenly today it's 'Enter'. Why today, after all these years do you suddenly change it to 'Enter'?

WILLIE. (*Shrugs.*) I'm trying to freshen up the act.

AL. Who asked you to freshen up the act? They asked for the Doctor Sketch, didn't they? The Doctor Sketch starts with 'Come-in', not 'Enter'. You wanna freshen up something, put some flowers in here.

WILLIE. It's a new generation today. This is not 1934, you know.

AL. No kidding? I didn't get today's paper.

WILLIE. What's bad about 'enter' instead of 'come-in'?

AL. Because it's different. You know why we've been doing it the same way for 43 years? Because it's good.

WILLIE. And you know why we don't do it anymore? Because we've been doing it the same way for 43 years.

AL. So, if we're not doing it anymore, why are we changing it?

WILLIE. Can I make a comment, nothing personal? I think you've been sitting on a New Jersey porch too long.

AL. What does that mean?

WILLIE. That means I think you've been sitting on a New Jersey porch too long. From my window, I see everything that goes on in the world. I see old people, I see young people, nice people, bad people, I see holdups, drug addicts, ambulances, car crashes, jumpers from buildings, I see everything. You see a lawn mower and a milkman.

AL. (*Looks at him long.*) And that's why you want to say 'Enter' instead of 'Come-in'?

WILLIE. Are you listening to me?

AL. (*Looks around.*) Why, there's someone else in the room?

WILLIE. You don't know the first thing that's going on today?

AL. Alright, what's going on today?

WILLIE. Did you ever hear the expression, that's where it is? Well, this is where it is and that's where I am.

AL. I see . . . Did you ever hear the expression, 'You don't know what the hell you're talking about'? It comes right in front of the *other* expression, 'You *never* knew what the hell you were talking about'.

WILLIE. *I* wasn't the one who retired. You know why you retired? Because you were tired. You were getting old-fashioned. I was still new-fashioned and I'll *always* be.

AL. I see. That's why you're in such demand. That's why you're such a 'hot' property today. That's why you do movies you don't do, that's why you're in musicals you're not in, and that's why you make commercials you

don't make because you can't even remember them to *make* them.

WILLIE. You know what I *do* remember? I remember what a pain in the ass you are to work with, that's what I remember.

AL. That's right. And when you worked with this pain in the ass, you lived in a *five* room suite. Now you live in a *one* room suite . . . And you're still wearing the same God damn pajamas you wore in the five room suite.

WILLIE. I don't have to take this crap from you.

AL. You're lucky you're getting it. No one else wants to give it to you.

WILLIE. I don't want to argue with you. After you say 'Knock knock knock' I'm saying 'Enter' and if you don't like it, you don't have to come in.

AL. You can't say nothing without my permission. I own fifty per cent of this act.

WILLIE. Then say *your* fifty per cent. I'm saying 'enter' in my fifty per cent.

AL. If you say 'Enter' after 'Knock knock knock' . . . I'm coming in alright. But not alone. I'm bringing a lawyer with me.

WILLIE. Where? From New Jersey? You're lucky if a *cow* comes with you.

AL. Against *you* in court, I could *win* with a cow. (*He enunciates each point by poking* WILLIE *in the chest.*)

WILLIE. (*Slaps his hand away.*) The *finger??* You're starting with the finger again? (*He runs into kitchen, comes out brandishing a knife.*)

AL. I'll tell you the truth now. I didn't retire. I *escaped.*

WILLIE. (*Wielding knife.*) The next time you give me the finger, say goodbye to the finger.

AL. (*Hiding behind chair.*) Listen, I got a terrific idea. Instead of working together again, let's never work together again. You're crazy.

WILLIE. I'm crazy, heh? I'M CRAZY!!

AL. Keep saying it until you believe it.

WILLIE. I may be crazy, but you're *senile!* You know what that is?

AL. I'm not giving you any straight lines.

WILLIE. Crazy is when you got a couple of parts that go wrong. Senile is when you went the hell out of business. That's you, Mister. (*The phone rings.* AL *moves towards phone.*) Get away from that phone. (*He drives knife into table.* AL *backs away in shock. Picks up phone.*) Hello?

AL. Is that my daughter?

WILLIE. Hello. How are you?

AL. Is that my daughter? Is that her?

WILLIE. (*To* AL.) Will you shut up? Will you be quiet? Can't you see I'm talking? Don't you see me on the phone with a person? For God's sakes, behave like a human being for five seconds, will you? . . . WILL YOU BEHAVE FOR FIVE SECONDS LIKE A HUMAN BEING??? (*Into phone.*) Hello? . . . Yes . . . Just a minute. (*To* AL.) It's your daughter. (*He sits, opens up* Variety.)

AL. (*Takes the phone, turns his back to* WILLIE, *speaks low.*) Hello . . . Hello, sweetheart . . . No . . . No . . . I can't talk now . . . I said I can't talk now . . . Because he's a crazy bedbug, that's why.

WILLIE. (*Jumps up.*) Mister is no good but bedbug is alright?? (*Yells into phone.*) Your father is sick! Come and get your sick father!!

AL. (*Turns to him.*) Don't you see me on the phone with a person? Will you please be quiet, for God's sakes! (*Back into phone.*) Listen, I want you to pick me up now . . . I don't want to discuss it, pick me up now. In front of the hotel. Don't park too close, it's filthy here . . . I *know* what I promised. Don't argue with me. I'm putting on my coat, I'll wait in the street, I'll probably get mugged . . . Alright, just a minute. (*He hands phone to* WILLIE.) She'd like to talk to you for a second.

WILLIE. Who is it?

AL. (*Glares at him.*) Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt . . . What do you mean, who is it? Didn't you just say it's your daughter?

WILLIE. I know it's your daughter. I forgot her name.

AL. Doris.

WILLIE. What does she want?

AL. (*Yells.*) Am I Doris? She'll tell you.

WILLIE. (*Takes phone.*) Hello? . . . Hello, dear, this is Willie Clark . . . Unpleasantness? There was no unpleasantness . . . There was stupidity maybe but no unpleasantness . . .

AL. Tell her I'm getting into my coat. (*He is putting coat on.*) Tell her I got one sleeve on.

WILLIE. (*Into phone.*) I was hoping it would work out too . . . I bent over backwards and forwards. He didn't even bend sideways . . .

AL. I got the other sleeve on . . . Tell her I'm up to my hat and then I'm out the door.

WILLIE. It's a question of one word, darling. Enter! . . . Enter, that's all it comes down to.

AL. (*Puts his hat on.*) The hat is on. I'm bundled up, tell her.

WILLIE. (*Into phone.*) Yes . . . Yes, I will . . . I'll tell him myself. I promise . . . Goodbye, Dorothy. (*He hangs up.*) I told her we'll give it one more chance.

AL. Not if you say enter. 'Come in' I'll stay, 'enter', I go.

WILLIE. Ask me 'Knock knock knock'.

AL. Don't fool around with me. I got enough pains in my neck. Are you going to say 'Come in'?

WILLIE. Ask me 'Knock knock knock'!

AL. I know you, you bastard!

WILLIE. ASK ME 'KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK'!

AL. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

WILLIE. (*Grinding it in.*) EN-TERRR!

AL. BEDBUG!!! CRAZY BEDBUG!!! (*Running out.*)

WILLIE. (*Big smile.*) ENNN-TERRRRR! (*The curtain starts down.*)

AL. (*Heading for the door.*) LUNATIC BASTARD!!

WILLIE. ENNN-TERRRR!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene 1

A doctor's office, or rather, an obvious stage 'flat' representation of a doctor's office. It has an old desk and chair, a telephone, a cabinet filled with medicine bottles, a human skeleton hanging on a stand, a blackboard with chalk and pointer, an eye chart on the wall. Overhead television lights surround the top of the set. Two boom microphones extend from either end of the set over the office.

At rise, the set is not fully lit. A thin, frail man in a hat and business suit, sits in the chair next to doctor's desk, patiently waiting.

Voice of TV Director. (*Over loudspeaker.*) Eddie! *EDDIE!* (*A young* Assistant Director *with head set and speaker, trailing wires and carrying a clip board, steps out on the set. Speaks through his mike.*)

Assistant. Yeah, Phil?

Voice. Any chance of doing this today?

Assistant. (*Shrugs.*) We're all set here, Phil. We're just waiting for the actors.

Voice. What the hell is happening?

Assistant. I don't know. There's a problem with the make-up. Mr. Clark wants a Number 7 Amber or something.

Voice. Well, get it for him.

Assistant. Where? They stopped making it 34 years ago . . .

Voice. Christ!

Assistant. And Mr. Lewis says the 'Ahh' sticks are too short.

VOICE. The what?

ASSISTANT. The 'Ahh' sticks. Don't ask me. I'm still trying to figure out what a 'look' stick is.

VOICE. What the hell are we making, 'Nicholas and Alexandra'? . . . Tell them it's just a dress rehearsal, we'll worry about the props later. Let's get moving, Eddie. Christ Almighty. (*The nephew* BEN *appears on stage, talks up into overhead mike.*)

BEN. Mr. Schaefer . . . Mr. Schaefer, I'm awfully sorry about the delay. Mr. Lewis and Mr. Clark have had a few technical problems backstage.

VOICE. Yeah, well, we've had it all week . . . I'm afraid we're running out of time here. I've got twelve God damned other numbers to get through today.

BEN. I'll get them right out. There's no problem.

VOICE. Tell them I want to run straight through, no stopping. They can clean up whatever they want afterwards.

BEN. Absolutely.

VOICE. I haven't seen past 'Knock knock, knock, come in' since Tuesday.

BEN. (*Looks off.*) Right . . . There they are. (*Into mike.*) We're ready, Mr. Schaefer. I'll tell them we're gonna go straight through, no stopping . . . Thank you very much. (BEN *exits very quickly.*)

VOICE. Alright, Eddie, bring in the curtains.

EDDIE. What?

VOICE. Bring in the curtains. Let's run it from the top with the voice over.

EDDIE. (*Calls up.*) Let's have the curtains. (*The curtains come in.*)

VOICE. Voice over!

ANNOUNCER. . . . The golden age of comedy reached its zenith during a fabulous and glorious era known as Vaudeville . . . Fanny Brice, W.C. Fields, Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, Will Rogers and a host of other greats fill its Hall of Fame . . . There are two other names that belong on this list, but they can never be listed separately

. . . They are more than a team . . . They are two comic shining lights that beam as one . . . For Lewis without Clark is like laughter without joy . . . We are privileged to present tonight, in their first public performance in over eleven years, for half a century known as the "Sunshine Boys", Mr. Al Lewis and Mr. Willie Clark, in their beloved scene . . . "The Doctor Will See You Now". (*The curtain rises and the set is fully lit. The frail* MAN *in the hat is sitting on the chair as* WILLIE, *the doctor, dressed in a floor-length white doctor's jacket, a mirror attached to his head and a stethoscope around his neck is looking into the* MAN'S *mouth, holding his tongue down with an 'ahh' stick.*)

WILLIE. Open wider and say 'Ahh'.

MAN. Ahhh.

WILLIE. Wider.

MAN. *Ahhh!*

WILLIE. (*Moves with his back to audience.*) A little wider.

MAN. Ahhh!

WILLIE. (*Steps away.*) Your throat is alright but you're gonna have some trouble with your stomach.

MAN. How come?

WILLIE. You just swallowed the stick. (*The* MAN *feels his stomach.*)

MAN. Is that bad?

WILLIE. It's terrible. I only got two left.

MAN. What about getting the stick out?

WILLIE. What am I, a tree surgeon? . . . Alright, for another ten dollars, I'll take it out.

MAN. That's robbery.

WILLIE. Then forget it. Keep the stick.

MAN. No, no. I'll pay. Take the stick out.

WILLIE. Come back tomorrow. On Thursdays I do woodwork. (MAN *gets up, crosses to door. The* MAN *exits . . . Calls out.*) Oh, Nurse! Nursey! (*The* NURSE *enters. She is a tall, voluptuous and over-stacked blonde in a tight dress.*)

NURSE. Did you want me, Doctor?

WILLIE. (*He looks at her, knowingly.*) Why do you think I hired you? . . . What's your name again?

NURSE. Miss MacKintosh. You know, like the apples.

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) The name I forgot, the apples I remembered . . . Look in my appointment book, see who's next?

NURSE. It's a Mr. Kornheiser.

WILLIE. Maybe you're wrong. Look in the book. It's better that way. (*She crosses to desk and bends way over as she looks through the appointment book. Her firm, round rear end faces us and* WILLIE. WILLIE *shakes his head from side to side in wonderful contemplation.*)

NURSE. (*Still down.*) No, I was right.

WILLIE. So was I.

NURSE. (*Straightens up and turns around.*) It's Mr. Kornheiser.

WILLIE. Are you sure? Spell it.

NURSE. (*Turns, bends and gives us the same wonderful view again.*) K-o-r-n-h-e-i-s-e-r! (*She turns and straightens up.*)

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) . . . What's the first name?

NURSE. (*Turns, bends.*) Walter.

WILLIE. Stay down for the middle name.

NURSE. (*Remains down.*) Benjamin.

WILLIE. Don't move and give me the whole thing.

NURSE. (*Still rear end up, reading.*) Walter Benjamin Kornsheiser. (*She turns and straightens up.*)

WILLIE. Oh, boy. From now on I only want to see patients with long names.

NURSE. Is there anything else you want?

WILLIE. Yeah. Call a carpenter and have him make my desk lower. (*The* NURSE *walks sexily right up to* WILLIE *and stands with her chest practically on his, breathing and heaving, then pouts her mouth and says:*)

NURSE. Yes, Doctor.

WILLIE. (*Wipes brow.*) Whew, it's hot in here. Did you turn the steam on?

NURSE. (*Sexily.*) No, Doctor.

WILLIE. In that case, take a five dollar raise . . . Send in the next patient before *I'm* the next patient.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor. (*She coughs.*) Excuse me, I think I have a chest cold.

WILLIE. Looks more like an epidemic to me.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor. (*She wriggles her way to the door.*) Is there anything else you can think of?

WILLIE. I can *think* of it but I'm not so sure I can *do* it.

NURSE. Well, if I *can* help you, Doctor, that's what the nurse is for. (*She exits and closes door with an enticing look.*)

WILLIE. I'm glad I didn't go to law school. (*Then we hear three knocks on the door. 'Knock, knock, knock.'*) . . . Aha. That must be my next patient. (*Calls out.*) Come in! (*The door starts to open.*) —and *enter!* (AL *steps in and glares angrily at* WILLIE. *He is in a business suit and carries a cheap attache case.*)

AL. I'm looking for the doctor.

WILLIE. Are you sick?

AL. Are *you* the doctor?

WILLIE. Yes.

AL. I'm not *that* sick.

WILLIE. . . . What's your name, please?

AL. Kornheiser. Walter Benjamin Kornheiser. You want me to spell it?

WILLIE. Never mind. I got a better speller than you . . . (*Takes tongue depressor from pocket.*) Sit down and open your mouth, please.

AL. There's nothing wrong with my mouth.

WILLIE. Then just sit down.

AL. There's nothing wrong with that either.

WILLIE. Then what are you doing here?

AL. I came to examine you.

WILLIE. I think you got everything backwards.

AL. It's possible. I dressed in a hurry this morning.

WILLIE. You mean you came here for me to examine *you.*

AL. No, I came here for me to examine *you.* I'm a Tax Collector.

WILLIE. (*Nods.*) That's nice. I'm a Stamp Collector. What do you do for a living?

AL. I find out how much money people make.

WILLIE. Oh, a busybody . . . Make an appointment with the nurse.

AL. I did. I'm seeing her Friday night . . .

WILLIE. (*Jumps up and down angrily.*) Don't fool around with my nurse. DON'T FOOL AROUND WITH MY NURSE! She's a nice girl. She's a *Virginian!*

AL. A what?

WILLIE. A *Virginian.* That's where she's from.

AL. Well, she ain't going *back,* I can tell you that. (*He sits, opens attache case.*) I got some questions to ask you.

WILLIE. I'm too busy to answer questions. I'm a doctor. If you wanna see me, you gotta be a patient.

AL. But I'm not sick.

WILLIE. Don't worry. We'll find something.

AL. Alright, you examine me and I'll examine you . . . (*Takes out tax form as* WILLIE *takes out a tongue depressor.*) The first question is, how much money did you make last year?

WILLIE. Last year I made— (*He moves his lips mouthing a sum but it's not audible.*)

AL. I didn't hear that.

WILLIE. Oh. Hard of hearing. I knew we'd find something . . . Did you ever have any childhood diseases?

AL. Not lately.

WILLIE. Father living or deceased?

AL. Both.

WILLIE. What do you mean, both?

AL. First he was living, now he's deceased.

WILLIE. What did your father die from?

AL. My mother . . . Now it's my turn . . . Are you married?

WILLIE. I'm looking.

AL. Looking to get married?

WILLIE. No, looking to get out. (*He looks in* AL's *ear with a flashlight.*)

AL. What are you doing?

WILLIE. I'm examining your lower intestines.

AL. So why do you look in the ear?

WILLIE. If I got a choice of two places to look, I'll take this one.

AL. (*Consulting his form.*) Never mind. Do you own a car?

WILLIE. Certainly I own a car. Why?

AL. If you use it for medical purposes, you can deduct it from your taxes. What kind of car do you own?

WILLIE. An ambulance.

AL. Do you own a house?

WILLIE. Can I deduct it?

AL. Only if you use it for medical purposes. Where do you live?

WILLIE. In Mount Sinai Hospital . . . Open your shirt, I want to listen to your heartbeat.

AL. (*Unbuttons two buttons on shirt.*) Will this take long?

WILLIE. Not if a hear something. (*He puts his ear to* AL's *chest and listens.*) Uh huh. I hear something . . . You're alright.

AL. Aren't you going to listen with the stethoscope?

WILLIE. Oh, sure. I didn't know you wanted a thorough examination. (*Puts stethoscope to ears and listens to his chest.*) Oh, boy. Ohhh, boyyyy! You know what you got?

AL. What?

WILLIE. A filthy undershirt . . .

AL. Never mind that. Am I in good health?

WILLIE. Not unless you change your undershirt.

AL. What is this, a doctor's office or a laundry? . . . I bet you never went to medical school.

WILLIE. (*Jumping up and down again.*) What are you

talkin'? . . . WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN'? . . . I went to Columbia Medical School.

AL. Did you pass?

WILLIE. Certainly.

AL. Well, you should have gone *in!*

WILLIE. Never mind . . . I'm gonna examine your eyes now.

AL. They're perfect. I got twenty-twenty eyes.

WILLIE. That's too much. All you need is one and one . . . Look at that chart on the wall. Now put your left hand over your left eye and your right hand over your right eye. (AL *does so.*) Now tell me what you see.

AL. I don't see nothing.

WILLIE. Don't panic, I can cure you . . . Take your hands away. (AL *does.*) Can you see now?

AL. Certainly I can see now.

WILLIE. You know I fixed over two thousand people like that.

AL. It's a miracle.

WILLIE. Thank you.

AL. A miracle you're not in jail . . . What do you charge for a visit?

WILLIE. A dollar.

AL. A dollar? That's very cheap for an examination.

WILLIE. It's not an examination. It's just a visit. 'Hello and Goodbye' . . . 'Hello and How are you' is ten dollars.

AL. If you ask me, you're a quack.

WILLIE. If I was a duck I would ask you . . . Now roll up your sleeve, I wanna take some blood.

AL. I can't do it.

WILLIE. Why not?

AL. If I see blood, I get sick.

WILLIE. Do what I do. Don't look.

AL. I'm sorry. I'm not giving blood. I'm anemic.

WILLIE. What's anemic?

AL. You're a doctor and you don't know what anemic means?

WILLIE. That's because I'm a specialist.

AL. What do you specialize in?

WILLIE. Everything but anemic.

AL. Listen, can I continue my examination?

WILLIE. You continue yours and I'll continue mine. All right, cross your legs. (*He hits* AL's *knee with a small hammer.*) Does it hurt if I hit you with the hammer?

AL. Yes.

WILLIE. Good. From now on, try not to get hit with a hammer. (*He throws hammer over his shoulder. He takes a specimen bottle from cabinet and returns.*) You see this bottle?

AL. Yes.

WILLIE. You know what you're supposed to do with this bottle?

AL. I think so.

WILLIE. You *think* so or you *know* so? If you're not sure, let me know. The girl doesn't come in to clean today.

AL. What do you want me to do?

WILLIE. I want you to go in this bottle.

AL. I haven't got time. I have to go over your books.

WILLIE. *The hell you will!*

AL. If I don't go over your books, the *government* will come in here and go over your books.

WILLIE. Don't they have a place in Washington?

AL. Certainly, but they have to go where the books are.

WILLIE. The whole government?

AL. No, just the Treasury Department.

WILLIE. That's a relief.

AL. I'm glad you're relieved.

WILLIE. I wish *you* were before you came in here. (*The door opens and the* NURSE *steps in.*)

NURSE. Oh, Doctor. Doctor Klockenmeyer.

WILLIE. Yes.

NURSE. Mrs. Kolodny is on the phone. She wants you to rush right over and deliver her baby.

WILLIE. I'm busy now. Tell her I'll mail it to her in the morning.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor. (*She exits and closes door.*)

AL. Where did you find a couple of nurses like that?

WILLIE. She was standing on 43rd and 44th Street . . . Let me see your tongue, please.

AL. I don't want to. (WILLIE *squeezes his throat and his tongue comes out.*)

WILLIE. Open the mouth . . . How long have you had that white coat on your tongue?

AL. Since January. In the spring I put on a grey sport jacket.

WILLIE. Now hold your tongue with your fingers and say 'Shishkabob'.

AL. (*Holds tongue with fingers.*) Thickabob.

WILLIE. Again.

AL. Thickabob.

WILLIE. I have bad news for you.

AL. What is it?

WILLIE. If you do that in a restaurant, you'll never get 'Shishkabob'.

AL. (*Stands with his face close to* WILLIE's.) Never mind that. What about your *t*axes. (*On the 'T,' he spits a little.*)

WILLIE. (*Wipes his face.*) The what?

AL. The *t*axes. It's *t*ime *t*o pay your *t*axes to the *T*reasury. (*All the 'T's are quite fluid.* WILLIE *wipes his face and glares angrily at* AL.)

WILLIE. . . . I'm warning you, don't start in with me.

AL. What are you talking about?

WILLIE. You know what I'm talking about. (*Illustrates.*) It's *t*ime *t*o pay the *t*axes . . . You're speaking with spitting again.

AL. I said the right line, didn't I? If it comes out juicy, I can't help that.

WILLIE. (*Quite angry.*) It doesn't come out juicy unless you squeeze the T's . . . I'm warning you, don't

squeeze them on me. (*The* VOICE *of the* TV DIRECTOR *is heard over the loudspeaker.*)

VOICE. . . . Okay, let's hold it a second . . . Mr. Clark, I'm having trouble with the dialogue. I don't find those last few lines in the script.

WILLIE. (*Shouts up.*) It's not in the script, it's in *his mouth.*

AL. (*Talking up into mike.*) I said the right line . . . Look in the script, you'll find it there.

WILLIE. (*Shouting.*) You'll find the words, you won't find the spit. The spit's his own idea. He's doing it on *purpose!*

AL. I don't spit on purpose. I spit on accident . . . I've *always* spitted on accident. It's not possible to say that line without spitting a little.

WILLIE. (*Addressing all his remarks to the unseen* DIRECTOR.) *I* can say it. (*He says the line with great delicacy, especially on the 'T's.*) "It's time to pay your taxes to the Treasury" . . . (*Back to his normal inflections.*) There wasn't a spit in my entire mouth. Why doesn't he say it like *that?*

AL. What am I, an Englishman? I'm talking the same as I've talked for 43 years.

VOICE. Gentlemen, can we argue this point after the dress rehearsal and go on with the sketch?

WILLIE. I'm not going to stand here and get a shower in the face. If you want me to go on, either take out the line or get me an umbrella.

VOICE. Can we *please* go on. With all due respect, gentlemen, we have twelve other scenes to rehearse and we cannot spend all day on personal squabbles . . .

WILLIE. I'll go on but I'm moving to a safer spot.

VOICE. Don't worry about the moves, we'll pick you up on camera . . . Now let's skip over this spot and pick it up on "I hope you don't have what Mr. Melnick had." (WILLIE *moves away from* AL.) . . . Alright, Mr. Clark, whenever you're ready.

WILLIE. (*Waits a minute, then goes back into Doctor*

character.) . . . I hope you don't have what Mr. Melnick had.

AL. What did Mr. Melnick have?

WILLIE. (*Points to standing skeleton.*) Ask him yourself, he's standing right there.

AL. That's Mr. Melnick?

WILLIE. It could be *Mrs.* Melnick. Without high heels, I can't tell.

AL. If he's dead, why do you leave him standing in the office?

WILLIE. He's still got one more appointment with me.

AL. (*Crosses to him.*) You know what you are? You're a charlatan! (*As* AL *says that line, he punctuates each word by poking* WILLIE *on the chest with his finger. It does not go unnoticed by* WILLIE.) . . . Do you know what a charlatan is? (*More pokes.*)

WILLIE. It's a city in North Carolina. And if you're gonna poke me again like that, you're gonna end up in Poughkeepsie.

VOICE. (*Over loudspeaker.*) Hold it, hold it. Where does it say "You're going to end up in Poughkeepsie"?

WILLIE. (*Furious.*) Where does it say he can poke me in the chest? He's doing it on purpose. He *always* did it on purpose just to get my goat.

AL. (*Looking up to mike.*) I didn't poke him, I tapped him. A light little tap, it wouldn't hurt a baby.

WILLIE. Maybe a baby elephant. I *knew* I was going to get poked. First comes the spitting, then comes the poking. I know his routine already.

AL. (*To mike.*) Excuse me. I'm sorry we're holding up the rehearsal but we have a serious problem on our hands. The man I'm working with is a lunatic.

WILLIE. (*Almost in a rage.*) *I'm* a lunatic, heh? He breaks my chest and spits in my face and calls *me* a lunatic! . . . I'm gonna tell you something now I never told you in my entire life. I hate your guts.

AL. You told it to me on Monday.

WILLIE. Then I'm telling it to you again.

VOICE. Listen, gentlemen, I really don't see any point in going on with this rehearsal.

AL. I don't see any point in going on with this *show.* This man is persecuting me. For eleven years he's been waiting to get back at me only I'm not gonna give him the chance. (*The* ASSISTANT *with the head phones walks out in an attempt to make peace.*)

WILLIE. (*Half-hysterical.*) . . . I knew it! I knew it! . . . He planned it! He's been setting me up for eleven years just to walk out on me again.

ASSISTANT. (*Trying to be gentle.*) Alright, Mr. Clark, let's settle down. Why don't we all go into the dressing room and talk this out?

AL. . . . I didn't want to do it in the first place.

WILLIE. (*Apoplectic.*) *Liar! Liar!!* . . . His daughter *begged* me on the phone. She *begged* me! (BEN *rushes out to restrain* WILLIE.)

BEN. Uncle Willie, please, that's enough . . . Come back to the dressing room.

ASSISTANT. Gentlemen, we need the stage. Can we please do this over on the side.

AL. (*To* ASSISTANT.) The man is hysterical, you can see for yourself. He's been doing this to me all week long. (*Taking off wig and jacket.*)

WILLIE. Begged me. She begged me. His own daughter begged me.

BEN. Uncle Willie, stop it, please.

AL. (*To others.*) I'm sorry we caused everyone so much trouble. I should have stayed in New Jersey in the first place. (*On his way out. To* ASSISTANT.) He pulled a knife on me last week. In his own apartment he pulled a knife on me. A crazy man. (*He is gone.*)

WILLIE. I don't need you. I *never* needed you. You were nothing when I found you and that's what you are today.

BEN. Come on, Willie. (*Out front.*) I'm sorry about this, Mr. Schaefer.

WILLIE. He thinks I can't get work without him . . .

Maybe *his* career is over, but not mine. Maybe he's finished, but not me. You hear? NOT ME! NOT M— (*He clutches his chest.*)

BEN. (*Turns and see him stagger.*) Grab him, quick! (*The* ASSISTANT *rushes to* WILLIE *but it's too late and* WILLIE *falls to the floor.* BEN *rushes to his side.*) Alright, take it easy, Uncle Willie, just lie there. (*To* ASSISTANT.) Get a doctor, please hurry. (*The* BIT ACTOR *and the* NURSE *rush out behind* BEN.)

WILLIE. (*Breathing hard.*) I don't need a doctor. Don't get a doctor, I don't trust them.

BEN. Don't talk, Willie, you're alright. (*To* NURSE.) Somebody get a blanket, please.

WILLIE. (*Breathing fast.*) Don't tell him. Don't tell him I fell down, I don't want to give him the satisfaction.

BEN. Of course I won't tell him, Willie. There's nothing to tell. You're going to be alright.

WILLIE. . . . Frito-Lays . . . That's the name of the potato chip . . . You see? I remembered . . . I remembered the name! Frito-Lays. (BEN *is holding* WILLIE'S *hand as the lights dim . . . the curtain falls on the scene. In the dark, we hear the voice of the* ANNOUNCER.)

ANNOUNCER. . . . The golden age of comedy reached its zenith during a fabulous and glorious era known as Vaudeville . . . Fanny Brice, W. C. Fields, Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, Will Rogers and a host of other greats fill its Hall of Fame . . . There are two other names that belong on this list, but they can never be listed separately . . . They are more than a team . . . They are two comic shining lights that beam as one . . . For Lewis without Clark is like laughter without joy . . . When these two greats retired, a comic style disappeared from the American scene that will never see its like again . . . Here then in a sketch taped nearly eleven years ago on the Ed Sullivan show, are Lewis and Clark in their classic scene, "The Doctor Will See You Now" . . . (*We hear* WILLIE'S *voice and that of the* FIRST PATIENT.)

WILLIE. Open wider and say 'Ahh'.

MAN. Ahh.

WILLIE. Wider.

MAN. Ahh.

WILLIE. A little wider.

MAN. Ahhh!

WILLIE. Your throat is alright but you're gonna have some trouble with your stomach.

MAN. How come?

WILLIE. You just swallowed the stick. (*The curtain rises.*)

ACT TWO

SCENE 2

WILLIE'S *hotel room. Two weeks later.*

It is late afternoon. WILLIE *is in his favorite pajamas in bed propped up on the pillows, his head hanging down, asleep. The television is droning away, another daytime serial. A Registered* NURSE *in uniform, a sweater draped over her shoulders and glasses hanging on a chain is sitting in chair watching the television. She is eating from a big box of chocolates. Two very large vases of flowers are on the bureau.* WILLIE'S *head bobs a few times, then opens his eyes.*

WILLIE. . . . What time is it?

NURSE. (*Turns off T.V., glances at watch.*) Ten to one.

WILLIE. Ten to one? . . . Who are you?

NURSE. Don't give me that. You know who I am.

WILLIE. You're the same nurse from yesterday?

NURSE. I'm the same nurse from everyday for two weeks now. Don't play your games with me.

WILLIE. I can't even chew a piece of bread, who's gonna play games? . . . Why'd you turn off the television?

NURSE. It's either watching that or watching you sleep, either one ain't too interesting.

WILLIE. I'm sorry. I'll try to sleep more entertaining . . . What's today, Tuesday?

NURSE. Wednesday. (*She bites into a piece.*)

WILLIE. How could this be Wednesday? I went to sleep on Monday.

NURSE. Haven't we already seen Mike Douglas twice this week?

WILLIE. Once.

NURSE. Twice.

WILLIE. (*Reluctantly.*) Awright, twice . . . I don't even remember. I was alright yesterday?

NURSE. We are doing very well.

WILLIE. We are? When did *you* get sick?

NURSE. (*Deadly serious, no smile.*) That's funny. That is really funny, Mr. Clark. Soon as I get home tonight I'm gonna bust out laughing.

WILLIE. You keep eating my candy like that you're gonna bust out a lot sooner.

NURSE. Well, *you* can't eat it and there's no sense throwing it out. I'm just storing up energy for the winter.

WILLIE. Maybe you'll find time in between the nougat and the peppermint to take my pulse.

NURSE. I took it. It's a little better today.

WILLIE. When did you take my pulse?

NURSE. When you were sleeping.

WILLIE. *Everybody's* pulse is good when they're sleeping. You take a pulse when a person is up. Thirty dollars a day, she takes a sleeping pulse . . . I'll tell you the truth, I don't think you know what you're doing . . . and I'm not a prejudiced person.

NURSE. Well, I am. I don't like sick people who tell registered nurses how to do their job. You want your tea now?

WILLIE. I don't want to interrupt your candy.

NURSE. And don't get fresh with me. You can get fresh

with your nephew but you can't get fresh with me. Maybe *he* has to take it but I'm not a blood relative.

WILLIE. That's for sure.

NURSE. That's even funnier than the other one . . . My *whole* evening's gonna be taken up tonight with nothing but laughing.

WILLIE. I don't even eat candy. Finish the whole box. When you're through, I hope you eat the flowers too.

NURSE. You know why I don't get angry at anything you say to me?

WILLIE. I give up. Why?

NURSE. Because I have a good sense of humor. I am *known* for my good sense of humor. That's why I can take anything you say to me.

WILLIE. If you nurse as good as your sense of humor, I won't make it to Thursday . . . Who called?

NURSE. No one?

WILLIE. I thought I heard the phone.

NURSE. (*Gets up.*) No one called. (*She crosses and puffs up his pillow.*) Did you have a nice nap?

WILLIE. It was a nap, nothing special . . . Don't puff up the pillows, please. (*He swats her hands away.*) It takes me a day and a night to get them the way I like them and then you puff them up.

NURSE. Oh, woke up a little grouchy, didn't we?

WILLIE. Stop making yourself a partner all the time. I woke up grouchy. Don't make the bed, please. I'm still sleeping in it. Don't make up a bed with a person in it.

NURSE. Can't stand to have people do things for you, can you? If you just want someone to sit here and watch you, you're better off getting a dog, Mr. Clark. I'll suggest that to your nephew.

WILLIE. Am I complaining? I'm only asking for two things. Don't take my pulse when I'm sleeping and don't make my bed when I'm in it. Do it the other way around and then we're in business.

NURSE. It doesn't bother me to do nothing as long as I'm getting paid for it. (*She sits.*)

WILLIE. . . . I'm hungry.

NURSE. You want your junket?

WILLIE. Forget it. I'm not hungry. (*She reads.*) . . . Tell me something, how old is a woman like you?

NURSE. That is none of your business.

WILLIE. I'm not asking for business.

NURSE. I am 54 years young.

WILLIE. Is that so? . . . You're married?

NURSE. My husband passed away four years ago.

WILLIE. Oh . . . You were the nurse?

NURSE. No, I was not the nurse . . . You could use some sleep and I could use some quiet. (*Gets up.*)

WILLIE. You know something? For a 54 year old registered widow, you're an attractive woman. (*Tries to pat her. She swings at him.*)

NURSE. And don't try that with me!

WILLIE. Who's trying anything?

NURSE. You are. You're getting fresh in a way I don't like.

WILLIE. What are you worried about? I can't even put on my slippers by myself.

NURSE. I'm not worried about your slippers. And don't play on my sympathy. I don't have any and I ain't expecting any coming in in the near future.

WILLIE. . . . Listen, how about a nice, alcohol rub?

NURSE. I just gave you one.

WILLIE. No, I'll give *you* one.

NURSE. I know you just say things like that to agitate me. You like to agitate people, don't you? Well, I am not an agitatable person.

WILLIE. You're right. I think I'd be better off with the dog.

NURSE. How did your poor wife stand a man like you?

WILLIE. Who told you about my poor wife?

NURSE. Your poor nephew . . . Did you ever think of getting married again? (*Takes his pulse.*)

WILLIE. What is this, a proposal?

NURSE. (*Laughs.*) Not from me . . . I am *not* think-

ing of getting married again . . . Besides, you're just not my type.

WILLIE. Why? It's a question of religion?

NURSE. It's a question of age. You'd wear me out in no time.

WILLIE. You think I can't support you? I've got Medicare.

NURSE. You never stop, do you?

WILLIE. When I stop, I won't be here.

NURSE. Well, that's where you're gonna be unless you learn to slow up a little.

WILLIE. Slow up? I moved two inches in three weeks, she tells me slow up.

NURSE. I mean if you're considering getting well again, you have to stop worrying about telephone calls and messages and especially when you're going back to work.

WILLIE. I'm an actor, I have to act. It's my profession.

NURSE. Your profession right now is being a sick person. And if you're gonna act anywhere, it's gonna be from a sick bed.

WILLIE. Maybe I can get a job on Marcus Welby.

NURSE. You can turn everything I say into a vaudeville routine if you want, but I'm gonna give you a piece of advice, Mr. Clark . . .

WILLIE. What?

NURSE. The world is full of sick people. And there just ain't enough doctors or nurses to go around to take care of all these sick people. And all the doctors and all the nurses can do just so much, Mr. Clark, but God, in His Infinite Wisdom has said He will help those who help themselves.

WILLIE. (*Looks at her.*) So? What's the advice?

NURSE. *Stop bugging me!!*

WILLIE. Alright, I'll stop bugging you . . . I don't know what the hell it means.

NURSE. That's better. Now you're my type again. (*The door bell rings. The* NURSE *crosses.*)

WILLIE. Here comes today's candy. (*She opens door.* BEN *enters with packages.*)

BEN. Hello. How is he?

NURSE. Fine. I think we're gonna get married.

BEN. Hey, Uncle Willie, you look terrific.

WILLIE. You got my Variety?

BEN. (*Crosses, gives him Variety.*) I also got about 200 get well telegrams from just about every star in show business. Lucille Ball, Milton Berle, Bob Hope, the Mayor. It'll take you nine months just to answer them.

WILLIE. What about a commercial? Did you hear from Alka-Seltzer?

BEN. We have plenty of time to talk about that . . . Miss O'Neill, did you have your lunch yet?

NURSE. Not yet.

WILLIE. She just finished two pounds of appetizers.

BEN. Why don't you go out, take an hour or so. I'll be here for a while.

NURSE. Thank you. I could use some fresh air. (*Gets her coat. To* WILLIE.) Now when I'm gone, I don't want you getting all agitated again, you hear?

WILLIE. I hear, I hear. Stop bugging me.

NURSE. And don't get up to go to the bathroom. Use the you-know-what.

WILLIE. (*Without looking up from his* Variety.) And if not, I'll do it you-know-where.

BEN. (*Pulling up a chair next to bed.*) Never mind, she's a very good nurse.

WILLIE. (*Looks in paper.*) Oh, boy, Bernie Eisenstein died.

BEN. Who?

WILLIE. Bernie Eisenstein . . . Remember the dance team, Ramona and Rodriguez? . . . Bernie Eisenstein was Rodriguez . . . He would have been 78 in August.

BEN. (*Sighs.*) Uncle Willie, could you put down *Variety* for a second?

WILLIE. (*Still reading.*) Did you bring a cigar?

BEN. . . . Uncle Willie, you realize you've had a heart

attack, don't you? . . . You've been getting away with it for years, the cigars, the corned beef sandwiches, the tension, the temper tantrums, you can't do it anymore, Willie . . . Your heart's just not going to take it.

WILLIE. This is the good news you rushed up with? . . . For this we could have skipped a Wednesday.

BEN. . . . I talked to the doctor this morning . . . And I'm going to have to be very frank and honest with you, Willie . . . you've got to retire . . . I mean give it up . . . Show business is out . . .

WILLIE. . . . Until when?

BEN. Until *never!* . . . Your blood pressure is abnormally high, your heart is weak, if you tried to work again you would kill yourself.

WILLIE. . . . Alright, let me think it over.

BEN. *Think what over?* There's nothing to think over. You can't work anymore, there's no decision to be made. Can't you understand that?

WILLIE. You decide for Ben Silverman, I'll decide for Willie Clark.

BEN. No! I decide for Willie Clark. I am your closest and only living relative and I am responsible for your welfare . . . You can't live here anymore, Willie. Not alone . . . And I can't afford to keep this nurse on permanently. Right now she's making more than I am. Anyway she already gave me her notice. She's leaving Monday. She's going to Buffalo to work for a very wealthy family.

WILLIE. Maybe she'll take me. I always did well in Buffalo.

BEN. Come on, Willie, face the facts. We have to do something and we have to do it quickly.

WILLIE. I can't think about it today . . . I'm tired, I'm going to take a nap. (*He closes his eyes and drops his head to the side on the pillow.*)

BEN. You want to hear my suggestion?

WILLIE. I'm napping. Don't you see my eyes closed?

BEN. I'd like you to move in with me and Helen and

the kids. We have the small spare room in the back, I think you would be very comfortable . . . Uncle Willie, did you hear what I said?

WILLIE. What's the second suggestion?

BEN. What's the matter with the first?

WILLIE. It's not as good as the second.

BEN. I haven't made any yet.

WILLIE. It's still better than the first. Forget it.

BEN. Why?

WILLIE. I don't like your kids. They're noisy. The little one hit me in the head with a baseball bat.

BEN. And I've also seen you talk to them for hours on end about vaudeville and had the time of your life. Right?

WILLIE. If I stopped talking, they would hit me with the bat . . . No offense, but I'm not living with your children. If you get rid of them, then we'll talk . . .

BEN. I know the reason you won't come . . . Because Al Lewis lives with his family and you're just trying to prove some stupid point about being independent.

WILLIE. . . . What's the second suggestion?

BEN. (*A long sigh.*) Alright . . . Now don't jump when I say this because it's not as bad as it sounds.

WILLIE. Say it.

BEN. There's the Actors' Home in New Brunswick . . .

WILLIE. It's as bad as it sounds.

BEN. You're wrong. I drove out there last Sunday and they showed me around the whole place. I couldn't believe how beautiful it was.

WILLIE. You went out there? You didn't have the decency to wait until I turned down living with you first?

BEN. I just went out to investigate, that's all. No commitments.

WILLIE. The Old Actors' Home, the first booking you got me in ten years.

BEN. It's on a lake, it's got 25 acres of beautiful grounds, it's an old converted mansion with a big porch . . .

WILLIE. I knew it. You got me on a porch in New Jersey. He put you up to this, didn't he?

BEN. You don't have to sit on the porch. There's a million activities there. They put on shows every Friday and Saturday night . . . I mean it's all old actors, what could be better for you?

WILLIE. . . . Why New Jersey? . . . I hate New Jersey . . . I'm sorry they ever finished the George Washington Bridge.

BEN. I couldn't get over how many old actors were there that I knew and remembered. I thought they were all dead.

WILLIE. Some recommendation. A house in the swamps with forgotten people.

BEN. They're not forgotten . . . They're well taken care of . . . Uncle Willie, I promise you, if you spend one day there that you're not happy you can come back and move in with me.

WILLIE. That's my choice . . . New Jersey or the baseball bat.

BEN. Alright, I feel a lot better about everything.

WILLIE. And what about you?

BEN. What do you mean what about me?

WILLIE. (*Pause . . . looks away.*) . . . I won't see you no more?

BEN. Certainly you'll see me. As often as I can . . . Did you think I wouldn't come to visit you, Uncle Willie?

WILLIE. Well, you know . . . people don't go out to New Jersey unless they have to.

BEN. Uncle Willie, I'll be there every week. *With* the *Variety*. I'll even bring Helen and the kids.

WILLIE. *Don't bring the kids!* Why do you think I'm going to the home for?

BEN. You know, this is the first moment since I've known you, that you've treated me like a nephew and not an agent. It's like a whole new relationship.

WILLIE. I hope this one works out better than the other one.

BEN. I've been waiting for this for fifteen years. You just wouldn't ever let me get close, Uncle Willie.

WILLIE. If you kiss me, I call off the whole thing.

BEN. No kiss, I promise . . . Now there's just one other thing I'd like you to do for me.

WILLIE. With my luck it's a benefit.

BEN. In a way it is a benefit. But not for any organization. It's for another human being.

WILLIE. What are you talking about?

BEN. Al Lewis wants to come and see you.

WILLIE. If you wanted to kill me, why didn't you bring the cigars?

BEN. He's been heartsick ever since this happened.

WILLIE. What do you think I've been? What is this, the mumps?

BEN. You know what I mean . . . He calls me twice a day to see how you are. He's worried to death.

WILLIE. Tonight tell him I'm worse.

BEN. He's not well himself, Willie. He's got diabetes, hardening of the arteries, his eyes are getting very bad . . .

WILLIE. He sees good enough to spit in my face.

BEN. He's lost seven pounds since you were in the hospital . . . Who do you think's been sending all the candy and flowers every day? . . . He keeps signing other people's names because he knows otherwise you'd throw them out.

WILLIE. They're *his* flowers? Throw 'em out!

BEN. Uncle Willie, I've never asked you to do a personal favor for me as long as I've known you . . . But this is important . . . For me, and for you, for Al Lewis . . . He won't even stay . . . He just wants to come up and say 'Hello' . . .

WILLIE. Hello, heh?

BEN. That's all.

WILLIE. And if he pokes me in the chest with the finger, I'm a dead man. That's murder, you know.

BEN. Come on, Willie. Give us all a break.

WILLIE. . . . Well, if he wants to come up, I won't stop him. But I can't promise a 'hello', I may be taking a nap.

BEN. (*Starts toward phone.*) I knew I could count on you, Willie. He's going to be very happy. (*He picks up phone.*)

WILLIE. You don't have to call him from here. Why should I pay sixty cents for him to come say hello?

BEN. (*He dials 'O'.*) It's not going to cost you sixty cents. (*To operator.*) Hello. Would you tell the boy at the desk to send Mr. Lewis up to Mr. Clark's room, please. Thank you. (*He hangs up.*)

WILLIE. (*As near to shouting as he can get.*) You mean he's here now in the hotel??

BEN. He's been with me all morning. I knew it would be alright.

WILLIE. First you commit me to the Old Man's Home, bring that bastard here and *then* you ask me?

BEN. (*All smiles.*) I'm sorry. I apologize. Never speak to me again . . . But just promise you'll be decent to Al Lewis.

WILLIE. I'll be wonderful to him. In my will, I'll leave him *you!* (*He starts to get out of bed.*)

BEN. What are you doing? You're not supposed to be out of bed.

WILLIE. You think I'm going to give him the satisfaction of seeing me laying in bed like a sick person . . . I'm gonna sit in my chair and I'm gonna look healthier than he does. (*He tries weakly to get on his slippers.*)

BEN. The doctor said you're not to get out of bed for *anything.*

WILLIE. Lewis coming to apologize to Clark is not anything. To me, this is worth another heart attack . . . Get my coat from the closet.

BEN. (*Starting for closet.*) Alright, but just walk slowly, will you, please. (*He opens closet.*)

WILLIE. And then I want you to move my chair all the way back. I want that son of a bitch to have a long walk.

BEN. (*Takes out bathrobe from closet.*) Here, put this on.

WILLIE. Not the bathrobe, the jacket. The blue sports jacket. This is gonna be a *formal* apology.

BEN. (*Puts back robe and takes out blue sports jacket.*) . . . He's not coming to apologize. He's just coming to say 'Hello'.

WILLIE. If he doesn't apologize, I'll drop dead in the chair for spite. And you can tell him that. (BEN *helps him into the blue sports jacket over the pajamas.*)

BEN. Now I'm sorry I started in with this.

WILLIE. That's funny. Because now I'm starting to feel good. (*Buttons jacket.*) Push the chair back. All the way. (BEN *picks up the chair and carries it to far side of room.*)

BEN. I thought I was bringing you two together.

WILLIE. (*He shuffles over to the chair.* BEN *helps him to sit.*) Put a pillow underneath. Make it two pillows. When I sit, I wanna look down on him. (BEN *puts a pillow under* WILLIE.)

BEN. This is the last time. I'm never going to butt into your lives again.

WILLIE. The only thing that could make today better was if it was raining. I would love to see him apologize dripping wet. (*And then come three knocks on the door, 'Knock, knock, knock'.*) Aha! This is it! . . . *This* was worth getting sick for! Come on, knock again. (*Points his finger in the air, his crowning moment.* AL *knocks again.*) *En-terrr!* (BEN *crosses to door and opens it.* AL LEWIS *timidly steps in with his hat in his hand and* WILLIE *immediately drops his head to his side, closes his eyes and snores, feigning a nap.*)

AL. (*Whispers.*) Oh, he's sleeping. I could come back later.

BEN. (*Also whispers.*) No, that's alright. He must be dozing. Come on in. (AL *steps in and* BEN *closes the door.*) Can I take your hat?

AL. No, I'd like to hold on to something, if you don't

mind. (BEN *crosses over to* WILLIE, *who is still dozing. He bends over and speaks softly in* WILLIE'S *ear.*)

BEN. Uncle Willie. There's someone here to see you.

WILLIE. (*Opens eyes, stirs.*) Heh? What?

BEN. Look who's here to see you, Uncle Willie.

WILLIE. (*Squints.*) I don't have my glasses. Who's that?

AL. It's me, Willie. Al . . . Al Lewis.

WILLIE. (*Squints harder.*) Al Lewis? You're so far away . . . Walk all the way over here. (AL *sheepishly makes the trek across the room with hat in hand. He squints again.*) Oh, *that* Al Lewis.

AL. I don't want to disturb you, Willie. I know you're resting.

WILLIE. That's alright. I was just reading my telegrams from Lucille Ball and Bob Hope.

AL. Oh, that's nice . . . (*Turns, looks at vase.*) Oh, look at the beautiful flowers.

WILLIE. I'm throwing them out. I don't like the smell . . . People send them to me every day with boxes of cheap candy. They mean well.

AL. (*Nods.*) They certainly do . . . Well, I just came up to see how you're doing. I don't want to take up your time. I just wanted to say 'Hello' . . . So hello—and goodbye. (*He starts to put on his hat to go.*)

WILLIE. Wait a minute. You got a few minutes before my next nap. Sit down and talk for a while.

AL. You're sure it's okay?

WILLIE. I'm sure you got a lot more to say than just 'Hello' . . . Would you like some tea?

AL. I would love some.

WILLIE. Go in the kitchen and make it.

BEN. I've got a better idea. I'll go down and have the kitchen send up a tray. If I call room service it'll take forever. (*He starts for door.*)

WILLIE. (*To* BEN.) You're going? You don't want to hear what Al has to say?

BEN. I don't think it's necessary. I'll be back in ten

minutes. (*At the door.*) It's good to see you, Mr. Lewis . . . It's good to see the *both* of you. (*He nods, then exits, closing door. There is an awkward silence between the two men for a moment . . . then:*)

AL. . . . He's a nice boy.

WILLIE. He's the best . . . Not too bright, but a good boy.

AL. (*Nods.*) . . . You've got everything you need here?

WILLIE. What could I need here?

AL. Some books? Some magazines?

WILLIE. No, I got plenty to do. I got all my fan mail to answer.

AL. You get fan mail?

WILLIE. Don't you?

AL. I don't even get jury duty.

WILLIE. Sure, plenty of people still remember . . . (*He coughs.*) Excuse me.

AL. You're sure it's alright for you to talk like this?

WILLIE. I'm not talking. I'm just answering . . . *You're* talking. (*There is a long pause.*) . . . Why? Is there something special you wanted to talk about?

AL. Like what?

WILLIE. What do I know like what? How should I know what's on your mind? Do I know why you can't sleep at night?

AL. Who said I don't sleep at night! I sleep beautifully.

WILLIE. Funny, to me you look tired. A little troubled. Like a person who had something on his conscience, what do I know?

AL. I have nothing on my conscience.

WILLIE. . . . Are you sure you looked good?

AL. I have *nothing* on my conscience. The only thing I feel badly about is that you got sick.

WILLIE. Thank you. *I accept your apology!!*

AL. What apology? Who apologized? I just said I'm sorry you got sick.

WILLIE. Who do you think *made* me sick?

AL. Who? *You* did, that's who! Not me. You yelled and screamed and carried on like a lunatic until you made yourself sick . . . and for that I'm sorry.

WILLIE. Alright, as long as you're sorry for something.

AL. I'm also sorry that people are starving in India but I'm not going to apologize. I didn't do it.

WILLIE. I didn't accuse you of India. I'm just saying you're responsible for making me sick and since you've come up here to apologize, I am gentleman enough to accept it.

AL. Don't be such a gentleman, because there's nothing to accept.

WILLIE. You're the one who came up here with your hat in your hand, not me.

AL. It's a twenty-five dollar hat, what was I gonna do, fold it up in my pocket?

WILLIE. If you didn't come to apologize, why did you send me the candy and flowers?

AL. I sent you candy and flowers?

WILLIE. Yes. Because it was on your conscience and *that's* why you couldn't sleep at night and *that's* why you came up here with your hat in your hand to apologize only *this* time I'm not a gentleman anymore and I *don't accept the apology!* How do you like that? (AL *stares at* WILLIE.)

AL. I knew there was gonna be trouble when you said 'Enter' instead of 'Come in'.

WILLIE. There's no trouble. The trouble is over. I got what I want and now I'm happy.

AL. What did you get? You got 'no apology' from me which you didn't accept.

WILLIE. I don't want to discuss it anymore, I just had a heart attack. (AL *stares at* WILLIE *silently.*)

AL. (*Calmly.*) . . . You know something, Willie. I don't think we get along too good.

WILLIE. Well, listen, everybody has their ups and downs.

AL. In 43 years, we had maybe one 'up' . . . To tell you the truth, I can't take the 'downs' anymore.

WILLIE. To be honest with you, for the first time I feel a little tired myself. In a way this heart attack was good for me. I needed the rest.

AL. So what are you going to do now?

WILLIE. Well, my nephew made me two very good offers today.

AL. Is that right?

WILLIE. I think I'm gonna take the second one.

AL. Are you in any condition to work again?

WILLIE. Well, it wouldn't be too strenuous . . . Mostly take it easy, maybe do a show on a Saturday night, something like that.

AL. Is that so? Where, in New York?

WILLIE. No, no. Out of town . . .

AL. Isn't that wonderful.

WILLIE. Well, you know me. I gotta keep busy . . . What's with you?

AL. Oh I'm very happy. My daughter's having another baby. They're gonna need my room and I don't want to to be a burden on them. . . . So we talked it over and I decided I'm gonna move to the Actors Home in New Brunswick.

WILLIE. (*He sinks back into his pillow, his head falls over to one side and he sighs deeply.*) Ohh, God. I got the finger again.

AL. What's the matter? You alright? Why are you holding your chest? You got pains?

WILLIE. Not yet. But I'm expecting.

AL. (*Nervously.*) Can I get you anything? Should I call the doctor?

WILLIE. It wouldn't help.

AL. It wouldn't hurt. (*The realization that they slipped accidentally into an old vaudeville joke causes* WILLIE *to smile.*)

WILLIE. 'It wouldn't hurt' . . . How many times have we done that joke?

AL. It always worked . . . Even from you I just got a laugh.

WILLIE. . . . You're a funny man, Al . . . You're a pain in the ass, but you're a funny man.

AL. You know what your trouble was, Willie? You always took the jokes too seriously. They were just jokes. We did comedy on the stage for 43 years, I don't think you enjoyed it once.

WILLIE. If I was there to enjoy it, I would buy a ticket.

AL. Well, maybe now you can start enjoying it . . . If you're not too busy, maybe you'll come over one day to the Actors Home and visit me.

WILLIE. You can count on it.

AL. I feel a lot better now that I've talked to you . . . Maybe you'd like to rest now, take a nap.

WILLIE. I think so . . . Keep talking to me, I'll fall asleep.

AL. (*Looks around.*) What's new in *Variety?*

WILLIE. Bernie Eisenstein died.

AL. Go on. Bernie Eisenstein? The house doctor at the Palace?

WILLIE. That was Sam Hesseltine. Bernie Eisenstein was Ramona and Rodriguez.

AL. Jackie Aaronson was Ramona and Rodriguez. Bernie Eisenstein was the house doctor at the Palace. Sam Hesseltine was Sophie Tucker's agent.

WILLIE. Don't argue with me, I'm sick.

AL. I know. But why should I get sick too. (*The curtain starts to fall.* WILLIE *moans.*) Bernie Eisenstein was the house doctor when we played for the first time with Sophie Tucker and that's when we met Sam Hesseltine . . . Jackie Aaronson wasn't Rodriguez yet . . . He was DeMarco and Lopez . . . Lopez died and DeMarco went into Real Estate so Jackie became Rodriguez . . .

CURTAIN

CURTAIN CALL

AL. . . . Don't you remember Big John McCafferey? The Irishman? He owned the Biltmore Theater in Pittsburgh? And the Adams Theater in Syracuse? Always wore a two pound diamond ring on his finger? He was the one who used to take out Mary Donatto, the cute little Italian girl from the Follies. Well, she used to go with Abe Berkowitz who was then the booker for the Orpheum circuit and Big John hated his guts because of the time when Harry Richman . . .

PROPERTY PLOT

PRESET:

Grocery shopping bag with (1-1)
- 3 cigars
- *Variety*
- diet soup (6 cans)
- bag of fruit
- bag of toiletries
- *flower vases (three)*
  - red roses
  - large bunch
  - small bunch

D. R. *table and 2 chairs on mark*
- $5.00 bill
- stethoscope
- bottle for specimen
- rubber hammer (1st hook)
- syringe (2nd hook)

Attache case:
- clip pen
- tax forms

Grocery bag (2-2)
- *Variety*
- 200 telegrams (rubber band)
- 2 bags of groceries

ACT ONE *and* TWO

Prop table R.:
- 3 flower vases
  - red roses
  - large bunch
  - medium bunch
- earphones
- clipboard
- newspaper
- pad and pencil (Ben) and watch
- cane (Al)
- glasses (Willie)
- blanket (2-1)

3 shirts for (1-2 change)
bag for nurse with needlepoint
needle and thread
Prop table L.:
back rest for bed
2 flower vases
large bunch
medium bunch
Flying
skeleton
nurses appointment book
attache case

PRESET:
Kitchen:
carving knife
milk in refrigerator
napkins
rack for napkins
tea kettle with hot water
garbage can
plastic bag in garbage can
3 tea mugs
3 tea bags in mugs
3 spoons
curtain open
bowl for fruit
bottle of cotton
Kitchen table (on mark):
R. chair in
L. chair 1' away face front
sugar bowl
salt and pepper
napkin holder with napkins
Radiator:
plant
cigarette lighter

ACT ONE

Stage Right:
coat rack
doors closed

Center:
chair (on marks)
TV on rack (on marks)
cord plugged in (kitchen)
cord off floor for trip
small table
phone (set to pick up)
wicker basket (½ full)
Variety on TV rack

Bathroom:
door
sport jacket
bathrobe
small table

Stage Left:
wicker basket (½ full)
Bed made with pillow out
bed made with pillow on
throw rug on foot
1 pillow out, pillow made

Table:
clock
pin cushion
needle, thread, button
kleenex (full)

ACT ONE

PRESET:

Bureau:
Top of bureau
mirror
comb and brush

Drawer first:
medicine bottles
thermometer
glass and spoon
alcohol
colored medicine

Drawer second:
sweater

Drawer third:
Time magazine
boxes of chocolate
thimble
gauze bottle

Drawer fourth:
magazines
papers
telegrams

ACT TWO—PRESET

TV set
Brms D. set—attaché case
U. L. rack
1 chair 6" away face in (mark)
R. chair face front

Table:
$5.00 bill
stethoscope
bottle for specimen
rubber hammer (1st hook)
syringe (2nd hook)
pen light (Willie)
clip pen (Willie)
earphones (Eddie)
clipboard (Eddie)
attache case (Al
tax forms
pen
Newspaper (patient)
Blanket (patient)
Grocery bag
Variety
200 telegrams

Hotel set:
Right:
3 flower vases
large radiator
roses R. table
medium R. table

curtain open
doors closed
table clear
boxes of chocolate
radiator
kitchen table
tea cup (kitchen)
gauze bottle (kitchen)

Hotel set:
Left:
Bureau—top:
medicine bottles
thermometer
glass
spoon
colored medicine
gauze bottle
Table C.:
needle point
needle
thread
thimble
box of choc. (open, below tel.)
Time mag. (under choc.)
nurse's handbag
Bathroom:
sport jacket
bathrobe
Closet D. R.:
nurse's coat

Hotel set:
Left:
Magazines
Papers
Telegrams (open)
Bed (pulled down:
back rest
2 pillows
Waste baskets:
below bed (½ full)
next to bureau (½ full)
2 tissues on floor D. L.

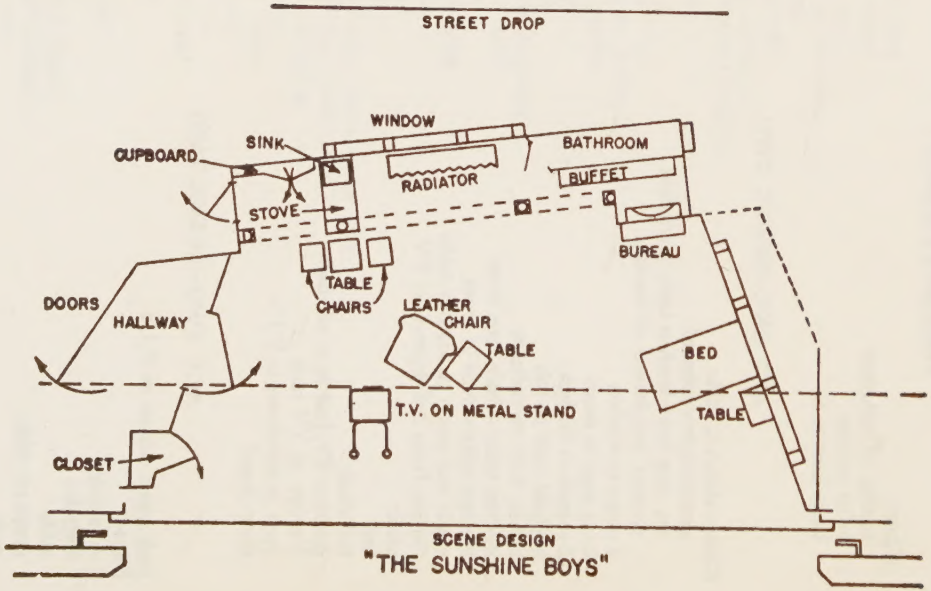
Clear:
clothes in bathroom
toilet articles
lamp back S. R.

ACT ONE—SCENE TWO

Clear—cigars C. table
groceries to cupboard
tea mug from kitchen table to kitchen
sweater 2nd drawer of bureau
2 mugs in kitchen
2 tea bags in mugs
2 spoons in kitchen
napkins rack on tab
lighter back to radiator
kitchen table—chair face front
kitchen table—chair in front
sugar and spoon on kitchen table
clothes from 2nd drawer on TV
chair
bed
bed chair
position TV just up R. of chair
Variety on TV rack
Jack in bathroom in P.J.'s
door closed

ACT TWO—SCENE TWO

Jack quick change to P.J.'s
Clear:
Al's coat
2 chairs
table
props on table
rack
rubber hammer
TV set all doors closed


STREET DROP
WINDOW
SINK
CUPBOARD
RADIATOR
BATHROOM
BUFFET
STOVE
BUREAU
TABLE
CHAIRS
DOORS
HALLWAY
LEATHER
CHAIR
TABLE
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The Gingerbread Lady

NEIL SIMON

(Little Theatre) Comedy-Drama

3 Men, 3 Women—Interior

Maureen Stapleton played the Broadway part of a popular singer who has gone to pot with booze and sex. We meet her at the end of a ten-week drying out period at a sanitarium, when her friend, her daughter, and an actor try to help her adjust to sobriety. But all three have the opposite effect on her. The friend is so constantly vain she loses her husband; the actor, a homosexual, is also doomed, and indeed loses his part three days before an opening; and the daughter needs more affection than she can spare her mother. Enter also a former lover louse, who ends up giving her a black eye. The birthday party washes out, the gingerbread lady falls off the wagon and careens onward to her own tragic end.

"He has combined an amusing comedy with the atmosphere of great sadness. His characteristic wit and humor are at their brilliant best, and his serious story of lost misfits can often be genuinely and deeply touching."—N.Y. Post. "Contains some of the brightest dialogue Simon has yet composed."—N.Y. Daily News. "Mr. Simon's play is as funny as ever—the customary avalanche of hilarity, and landslide of pure unbuttoned joy . . . Mr. Simon is a funny, funny man—with tears running down his cheek."—N.Y. Times.

Royalty $50-$35

The Sunshine Boys

NEIL SIMON

(All Groups) Comedy

5 Men, 2 Women

An ex-vaudeville team, Al Lewis and Willie Clarke, in spite of playing together for forty-three years, have a natural antipathy for one another. (Willie resents Al's habit of poking a finger in his chest, or perhaps accidentally spitting in his face). It has been eleven years since they have performed together, when along comes CBS-TV, who is preparing a "History of Comedy" special, that will of course include Willie and Al—the "Lewis and Clark" team back together again. In the meantime, Willie has been doing spot commercials, like for Schick (the razor blade shakes) or for Frito-Lay potato chips (he forgets the name), while Al is happily retired. The team gets back together again, only to have Al poke his finger in Willie's chest, and accidentally spit in his face.

". . . the most delightful play Mr. Simon has written for several seasons and proves why he is the ablest current author of stage humor."—Watts, N. Y. Post. "None of Simon's comedies has been more intimately written out of love and a bone-deep affinity with the theatrical scene and temperament." Time. ". . . another hit for Neil Simon in this shrewdly balanced, splendidly performed and rather touching slice of the show-biz life."—Watt, New York Daily News. "(Simon) . . . writes the most dependably crisp and funny dialogue around . . . always well-set and polished to a high lustre."—WABC-TV. ". . . a vaudeville act within a vaudeville act . . . Simon has done it again."—WCBS-TV.

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